of reality. Rasmussen sees further support for this possibility in recent psychological studies of perception, which understand "particles" to be properties of conscious beings (pp. 260–61). He notes also that a mind-first notion of reality makes sense given that the world is not fundamentally chaotic, but rather is intelligible. Finally, the existence of persons is more plausible if the foundation from which persons emerge is itself personal. Rasmussen concludes the book with a consideration of what he calls the "destruction problem." If mindless matter (which includes the body) cannot construct a conscious substance, then by symmetry the absence of mindless matter cannot destroy a conscious substance. Therefore, persons can exist even after the body associated with that person ceases to exist (p. 277).

Rasmussen intends the book to be accessible to the lay person while maintaining the interest of the specialist, and he partially succeeds in both respects. Some readers might be encouraged by Rasmussen's repeated assertion that it's hard work to ask and answer these deep questions, as well as by his assurances that it will be worth the effort to go where few have dared to tread, though others are just as likely to find these refrains grating and condescending. Those skeptical of Rasmussen's conclusions will appreciate his willingness to take nothing for granted, including his own existence. The result, however, is that the book wades into debates that are unlikely to help the casual reader follow the argument. Those less interested in the baroque concerns of contemporary analytic philosophy can follow the trajectory of the book's argument by reading only the introductory and summary portions of each chapter.

All readers will be served well by the book's most significant contribution to the study of consciousness, which is Rasmussen's insistence upon the indispensable role of attention to the data of consciousness. Much discussion in modern philosophy of mind not only ignores these data but also actively dismisses them, resulting in what philosopher Bernard Lonergan called the "truncated subject." Rasmussen is to be commended for his effort to understand human consciousness through his relentless attention to its contents.

Unfortunately, the effort is severely hampered by a conflation between knowing and looking that permeates the book. Rasmussen's theory of the nature and origin of persons would be immensely strengthened if understanding (i.e., intellect in action) were to be distinguished from adequate seeing, and if the real (i.e., verified intelligibility) were to be distinguished from that which is adequately seen. Then his theory of the person *qua* conscious substance could be affirmed as real even though it cannot be seen. Furthermore, the emergence of such a substance could be understood by analogy with the paradigmatic instance of emergence, that is, the emergence of the act of understanding out of acts of perception. If readers are unable to complement Rasmussen's argument with their own grasp of these distinctions, they are likely to either reject the book's foundational assertions about the reality of their own conscious acts or simply trust Rasmussen that his conclusions are correct. Thus, in the opinion of this reviewer, the book will best serve the reader, casual or specialist, who is able to evaluate the cogency of Rasmussen's argument without relying on the ocular version of knowing that permeates it.

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Social Sciences

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GENERATIONS: The Real Differences between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future by Jean M. Twenge. New York: Atria Books, 2023. 560 pages. Hardcover; $32.50. ISBN: 9781982181611. E-book; $16.99. ASIN: B0B3Y9RSFP.

> Thinking without comparison is unthinkable. And, in the absence of comparison, so is all scientific thought and scientific research.
> —Sociologist Guy Swanson, 1971

Certainly, the ideas behind Swanson's observations guide the work of San Diego State University psychologist Jean M. Twenge, who has published scores of peer-reviewed empirical studies comparing the responses of different birth cohorts (generations) on the same social survey questions over time. Although limited to the United States here, her empirical research mostly compares present attitudes to past ones and compares different generations to each other in the same time frame. She has long been thinking with comparisons.

Twenge's previous book, *iGen* (2017), drew on publicly available data from four major social surveys to argue convincingly that social media heavily influenced Gen Z (composed of people born between 1995 and 2012), often to their physical and psychological detriment. In her sequel, Twenge seeks to widen the scope and the audience for such research and even purports to predict the future of America. Even if the science of comparing generational cohorts will fall short in predicting the future (as seems likely), readers will benefit from learning about typical traits of different generations or birth cohorts in the United States.

Generations compares six generations of Americans: the Silent generation (born 1925–1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1979), Millennials (born 1980–1994), Generation Z (born 1995–2012), and Polars (born 2013–present). Each of the substantive chapters (chaps. 2–7) focuses on a single generation and contrasts its members' average responses on a wide array of social survey questions from twenty-four datasets with a combined number of 39 million respondents. Most readers will be able to identify family, friends, and neighbors from each generation that exemplify some of the attitudes that Twenge labels as distinctive.

Twenge constantly uses charts to show differences between generations and average attitudinal shifts over time. While the book is hefty and full of statistics and charts that can occasionally overwhelm the reader, the prose is mostly lively and sprinkled with humor. The overall impact is to convince the reader that generational cohorts do tend to share outlooks. My copy is studded with post-it flags marking places in the text where her observations surprised me or nailed down something I had only vaguely sensed before. As a member of Generation X, for instance, I was surprised at how many traits identified by Twenge resonated with my own life experiences, and I suspect other readers will have similar "aha" moments for their generation. They can also gain a new appreciation for how other generations have impacted American society.

How have generational cohorts come to differ? Twenge's thesis, laid out on pages 4–19, is that technological changes drive generational differences, often mediated by individualism and a "slow-life strategy, with lower birth rates, slower development, and more resources and care put into each child" (p. 18). With lower death rates, longer life expectancies, and technological changes, younger generations can take their time in finishing their education, starting their careers, marrying, buying a home, and having children—if they even decide to have children at all. As Twenge notes, "By 2020, the birth rate for both teens and for women in their early 20s was the lowest it had ever been since records were first kept in 1918—about half of what it was in 1990" (p. 377). The slow-life strategy, ascendant for the younger generations, might be the most important shift described in the book, along with declines in religious belief and behavior.

Even if academic researchers might want to quibble about her use of "technology" as a very broad, catch-all term, it is impossible to dispute that these trends are in motion for the typical members of these cohorts. The effects are evident to anyone who knows college-educated young adults in their twenties or thirties. They are less likely to marry, less likely to have children, less likely to attend religious services, and less likely to hold traditional views of gender identity when compared to previous generations. Cross-national comparisons with Canada and other industrialized countries—as well as more diverse countries—might help clarify the reasons for such generational shifts of attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, when the book seeks to predict the future in the final chapter, it feels forced. Twenge herself cites at least three failed predictions made by Neil Howe and William Strauss, the previous gurus of generational analysis (p. 295). Readers thirty years from now should return to this volume to see how well Twenge's predictions have held up. One suspects that we will be surprised by some unforeseen trends.

Notably for the readers of this journal, measures of religious observance and belief show steep declines that began with Millennials (born 1980–1994) and continued with Gen Z (born 1995–2012). This is a troubling trend for anyone who cares about social well-being. As Twenge notes, "Humans have an innate desire to believe in something larger than themselves and to seek meaning in their lives. If religion stops filling this role, something else will step in

to fill it" (p. 504). Twenge cannot help but express a concern for the future of American society here and elsewhere. Christian scholars should join her. After all, our faith is transmitted through the generations. As Psalm 145:4 says, "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts." Are we failing to transmit the story to younger generations? This book compiles extensive evidence that we might be—and that American society might be worse off as a result.

Generations is best understood less as an attempt to advance psychological science and more as a concerned American psychologist's data-studded jeremiad. Twenge compares thousands of data points in order to persuade us to care about the future of American society, which has promoted individualism to the detriment of collective well-being. Those called to love their neighbor would do well to study the trends here and ponder how they can care better for all generations of those neighbors. For those of who us are part of a kingdom that "endures through all generations" (Ps. 145:13), we can learn from Twenge how to reach members of each of the generations alive today while promoting a less individualistic society.

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Technology

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THE DIGITAL PUBLIC SQUARE: Christian Ethics in a Technological Society edited by Jason Thacker. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023. 384 pages. Paperback; $34.99. ISBN: 9781087759821.

Questions about the role of digital technologies are becoming increasingly important. In 2014, Luciano Floridi published *The Onlife Manifesto*, arguing that the digital and physical worlds were in the process of merging and that any meaningful distinction between offline and online was shrinking. The advance in digital technology provides fertile ground for academic discussion of digital technologies and their role in human society. Following the popularity of *The Age of AI*, Jason Thacker has quickly become one of the prominent voices in evangelical thought in this area. His most recent contribution is an edited volume, *The Digital Public Square*, which focuses on issues of public theology such as censorship, sexual ethics, hate speech, or religious freedom as they present themselves in the digital milieu. Following Jacques Ellul, Thacker dubs this milieu "the technological society."

The book contains thirteen articles that are divided into three major sections which attempt to articulate a public theology for the technological society. Public theology is a relatively young field. Hak Joon Lee suggests that public theology seeks to engender religious discourse within the context of a pluralistic society by acknowledging the importance of human rights, tolerance, equality, and other democratic values without suppressing the variety of possible expressions of religion.[1] Public theology is a theology done towards, with, and for the general public for the sake of the common good of the society.

The first section attempts to provide the foundation for public theology in a technological society. Chapter 1 sets out a Christian philosophy of technology, chapter 2 advocates for the virtue of patience in online interactions, and chapter 3 charts a middle path between technological optimism and pessimism in US attitudes toward technology. A particular standout is chapter 4, Patricia Shaw's extensive survey of international technology policy in "The Global Digital Marketplace." While, like most policy articles, it is a little dry, Shaw's article is thorough, well sourced, and well organized. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the challenges of free speech in a digital milieu and the limits of policy-based approaches.

The second section of the book includes six articles that address specific issues in public theology with an eye toward specifically digital iterations of these issues. This section covers implications of freedom of speech on digital media (chap. 6), specifically hate speech (chap. 7), content moderation (chap. 8), and pornography (chap. 9). It also addresses the explosion of conspiracy theories and the problem of digital misinformation (chap. 10) and the rise of digital authoritarianism (chap. 11). Finally, the third section offers two articles that articulate the church's role in the technological society in terms of discipleship (chap. 12) and public witness (chap. 13).

One immediate point worth noting is that this book has more to do with public theology, and specifically concerns around the freedom of expression, than it