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Austin J. Spiller
Southeastern University - Lakeland, austinjspiller@gmail.com

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ANTHROPOLOGY & APOLOGETICS:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY APOLOGETIC METHODOLOGY
THROUGH THEIR ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

MASTER'S THESIS

PRESENTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY
AT SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF DIVINITY

BY

AUSTIN SPILLER, B.S.

SPRING 2020

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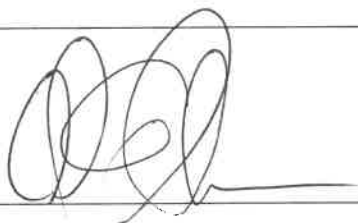
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Austin Spiller

under the direction of the candidate's Thesis Committee and approved by all members of the Committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the Barnett College of Ministry and Theology of Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Divinity.

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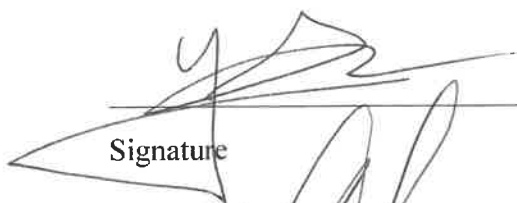
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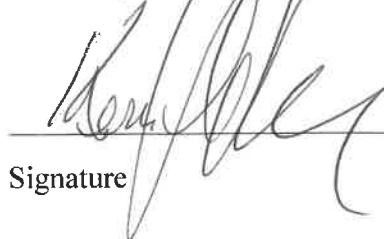
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Yoon Shin, PhD

Advisor, First Reader



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Kenneth Archer, PhD

Second Reader

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that contemporary apologetic approaches correlate to, or derive their methods from, different anthropological models with various degrees of accuracy, and that an interdisciplinary study of humanity leads to proper conclusions for apologetic method. Three of the most utilized contemporary apologetic methods are Traditional Apologetics, Presuppositionalism, and Experiential/Narrative Apologetics. Each method reflects an assumption of human persons as *thinkers*, *believers*, or *desirers*, respectively. Interdisciplinary research from theology, sociology, psychology, economics, and neuroscience corroborates the anthropological assumption of humans as essentially *desirers*. This research leads to at least three important implications for apologetic method, including a focus on persuasion over argumentation, creativity over rigidity, and community over individuality.

To my brother, Derek,

for a lifetime of conversations

and to my wife, Hannah,

sine qua non

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Why: Derek's Story

My younger brother Derek and I were always close. While many siblings foster resentment towards each other, our difficult lives only brought us closer over the years. After I left for college to study ministry, I was astonished to find out that Derek denounced his faith, claiming it as illogical, unsubstantiated, and misguided. He was appalled at the church and found Christians to be irrational. After finding a home in science and atheism, he would frequently argue his convictions with our mother since I was away. Although she is a strong Christian, she was unconcerned with logical arguments in defending her faith. She just *knew* it to be true. She held a “simple” faith.¹ Unsurprisingly, especially given his personality and background, this was not enough for him. Derek’s search for meaning and truth forbid an uncritical acceptance of such beliefs. So, Derek and I began to dialogue.

Through shared contemplation of philosophical and theological topics, I presented arguments for theism and subsequently Christianity. Derek called me his “sparring partner”; which I became quite fond of. After over a year and a half of dialogue, as Derek and I sat on his bedroom floor passing around a mini football, he finally conceded: not only is God real, but Christianity makes the most sense. Immediately, my heart was filled with joy – at least until his

¹ Although the term “simple” is often used derogatorily, it was included as that would likely be the intention of Derek at the time. My firm belief is that one’s faith is not less for lack of logical arguments to defend it. I would point to Alvin Plantinga’s view of God as a properly basic belief which upholds and reinforces this assertion. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

next words: “But, I still do not want to be a Christian.” Shocked, I desperately tried to reconcile his statements in my head. I had no idea what to do next.

So, I decided to share my testimony. The story of how my past trauma and depression led to a suicide attempt. How as I stood there about to end my life, I whispered desperate last words with tear-filled eyes: “God, if there is more to this life, please stop me.” In what was likely the luckiest “coincidence” of my life, someone found me, and I was stopped. Although this experience did not provide the panacea for all my issues, and even though the subsequent journey was quite arduous, that day I gave my life to sharing the light that I had found and caring for people in the midst of darkness. Instantly, Derek wept. Unfamiliar with the nuances of my story, Derek was startled and saddened. Yet familiar with mental health and life struggles, suddenly the abstract dialogue was thoroughly relevant and practical; his story made sense within the grand story of Christianity. In the overwhelming haze that tends to follow a change of heart, he pondered the future of his story: what is he to do now? After we prayed that day, and after a seemingly endless amount of philosophy and theology discussions over the past few years, Derek looks back on his past with curiosity. He can draw connections between his unbelief and specific life factors, such as his lack of community and painful past. While his journey, like mine, is still characteristically marked by intellectual curiosity and skepticism, his testimony is worthy of reflection.

This thesis aims to make sense of Derek’s testimony, along with countless others, where reason, evidences, and arguments were not enough when it came to conversion or even a sincere exploration of Christianity – even for a person with the proclivities and personality such as his. Diverse means led up to Derek’s change of heart: friendly dialogue with a trusted partner, prolonged presence, narratives and testimonies, hope for a better future, appeals to emotions,

coherency of a system, relevancy to life, and especially the drawing of God. Once Derek conceded intellectual defeat, some would argue there was cause for celebration: not only were his arguments destroyed, but he admitted Christianity is the most rational option – the faith has been defended! For many apologists, this presentation of rational arguments and evidences for the Christian faith is where apologetics begins and ends – as this encapsulates the defense of the faith.² However, perhaps apologetics is (or should be) more than this.

Over the years, I came to realize that I was shaped by a particular model that affected my method for apologetics and my beliefs about Derek. I had a certain idea of the sort of creature humans are and why they believe and act the way they do. This formed the way I defended the faith and engaged with Derek. This correlation is exactly the type of question apologists should pose about their method: what kind of person does this method presuppose, and what kind does it nurture?³ It is likely many apologists fail to uncover the type of person their method assumes, if not advances, and critically reflect on the consequences of such a person. This is to the detriment of the faith and apologetics, I believe, as there is reason to be concerned about the prevailing anthropological models in light of current research.⁴

James K.A. Smith describes three of the prevalent possibilities in theological and philosophical anthropology.⁵ The first defines the human person as *thinker*. This is a “rationalist”

² The next chapter’s discussion on traditional apologetic methodology explores this general approach and the variation within it.

³ Richard Sennett poses this exact question about the psychological effects of capitalism on human persons. See Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); quoted in Rowan Williams, *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2018), 84.

⁴ This research is the topic of the third chapter.

⁵ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 40–63, esp. 40–47.

or “intellectualist” portrait with emphasis on cognitive faculties and an optimism towards reason, often paired with functional disembodiment. The *person-as-thinker* model especially prevailed throughout modernity, and currently is adapted by much of Protestant Christianity.⁶ The second defines the human person as *believer*. As a critique to the former, the *person-as-believer* model views humans primarily through their pre-rational beliefs, since thinking is dependent upon one’s worldview, the “commitments and trusts that orient our being-in-the-world”; this model is portrayed in Reformed Christianity.⁷ The third defines the human person as *desirer* or *lover*. This model discounts the former two as reductionistic, and instead passes on a more holistic anthropology developed from Augustine. In the *person-as-desirer* model, humans intend the world through their unconscious desire and love; the *telos* of this desire orients their path in the world and is affected primarily through bodily, narrative, affective, and relational ways. Smith finds this model to be the most promising. Each of these models reflect the assumptions of a different apologetic approach, as will be explored later.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the type of human person apologetic methodologies presuppose to glean insight for apologetic method through comparison to current anthropological research. Due to the size of such a task, the scope of this project will be limited in a few ways. First, the apologetic approaches that are analyzed will be limited to frequently utilized contemporary methods on the basis of relevance and focus. This will omit from consideration apologetic approaches that are solely historic, hold too few adherents, lack a specific or

⁶ Protestant Christianity’s emphasis on ideas, abstract values, propositional knowledge and revelation, and an “overly intellectualist” view of salvation are great examples of this. See David W. Bebbington, “Evangelical Christianity and Modernism”, *Crux* 26, no. 2 (1990): 1–9; Alister McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics: Sharing the Relevance, Joy, and Wonder of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 12–15; and Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 42.

⁷ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 43–45.

actionable method, or apologetic tools or mediums that are not an established system — regardless of how insightful they may be. Second, the anthropological research covered will be limited to theology, neuroscience, and the social sciences, specifically sociology, psychology, and economics. This range allows for a diverse array of voices to comment on anthropological issues and corroborate each other where applicable. Third, the final reflections derived from the anthropological research will be limited to a few key insights that lack development in the already analyzed methods. In other words, since an apologetic method that assumes an “accurate” anthropology will have already been analyzed, the reflections on a properly informed apologetic method will not reiterate all that was already said, but instead develop the approach further from important research implications.

The How: Structure and Flow of the Argument

Chapter two begins with an exploration of various taxonomies of contemporary apologetic approaches in order to better illustrate the current climate of apologetics. This results in around fifteen apologetic approaches for consideration. After a brief examination of them all, the approaches are limited according to the scope of the thesis above, resulting in four criteria for further examination: (1) current utilization in contemporary settings; (2) inclusion of one or many specific or actionable methodologies; (3) support from several notable proponents or adherents, and (4) must be a standalone method or system, not a tool or medium. The remaining approaches are further condensed into wider categories based on similar strategies or structures if applicable. Each of these categories are then explored and examined through their methodology and anthropological underpinnings. A summary of the methods’ anthropological models and apologetic aims will conclude this chapter.

Chapter three explores the interdisciplinary anthropological research. The first section examines theological anthropology through three main lenses: (1) the early Genesis narratives, (2) Christology, and (3) Pauline literature. The second section contains research from the sciences, including psychology, sociology, economics, and neuroscience. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the main anthropological insights of the interdisciplinary research, compare the results to Smith's three models, and end with three significant implications for apologetic method that were not already developed.

Chapter four translates the three apologetic implications from the previous chapter into three dichotomies for apologetic reflection: persuasion over argumentation, creativity over rigidity, and community over individuality. Each of these are unpacked and developed with the insight derived from the anthropological research. The first section explores nine modes of persuasion for the apologist to engage: (1) *logos*, persuasion by means of logic and coherency; (2) *ethos*, persuasion by means of character and authority; (3) *pathos*, persuasion by means of emotions and values; (4) *kairos*, persuasion by means of timing and appropriateness; (5) *mythos*, persuasion by means of narrative and testimony; (6) *topos*, persuasion by means of theme and relevance; (7) *tropos*, persuasion by means of way and manner; (8) *typos*, persuasion by means of imitation and embodiment; and (9) *theos*, persuasion by means of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The second section on creativity discusses the plurality of ways to engage the apologetic task. The third section emphasizes community and collaboration in apologetics. Finally, the conclusion will consist of a summary of a properly informed apologetic methodology according to the former research and reflections.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO APOLOGETIC METHOD

Introduction

Apologetics is like a beautifully aged tree. Ancient sundry roots blossom into majestic scenery, producing various colors, patterns, and fruit, transforming with the season. Over the centuries, apologists – with variegated foci and presuppositions – produced a range of colorful and fruitful approaches. Although, when the seasons change, some methods and approaches become vacuous and arid, irrelevant and obsolete. While God remains constant, apologetic methodology constantly requires pruning; the dying branches must be cut-off for new growth.¹ For continual life and beauty, the tree – like apologetics – must be reshaped and guided to continue in the new seasons or tough terrain. When the cultural climate changes, such as in the Enlightenment of the 18th Century, so, too, must the apologists and their methods change for influence and survival; lack of adaptability and progression stymies growth.² Although the historic roots of apologetics and their foci perpetually recede and revive, the apologist’s challenge is to defend the faith in their context.³ As the apologist abides in God, and God abides in the apologist, he/she will bear

¹ Braxton Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics: Compatibility and Integration* (Evansville: Trinity Academic Press, 2014), 100.

² As Christianity was devastated by the attacks of the Enlightenment, several apologists — with very different approaches — responded to the call. See John Warwick Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, eds. Khaldoun A. Sweis and Chad V. Meister (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 24–25.

³ In tracing the history and development of apologetics, this oscillation is made evident. Aristotelian proofs and literary apologetics from the medieval period, for example, still influence many apologists today. Conversely, many early apologetic emphases, such as miracles, are not as influential today. Apologetic methods ebb and flow in usage over the epochs. For a succinct history of apologetics, see Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 21–28.

fruit (cf. Jn. 15:5-6); similarly, the vitality of apologetic methodology also depends on this mutual remaining. Thus, apologetics is simultaneously person-centered and God-centered. The question remains: how, then, may the faith be defended today?

The spectrum of contemporary approaches offers a wide array of answers. Before proposing a new or revised approach towards apologetics, an analysis and selection of the prevalent contemporary apologetic methodologies is required. Identifying and assessing an extensive list of apologetic methods and approaches is quite the daunting, if not impossible, task. Why even are there so many different apologetic methods? If defense of the faith is a biblical command, why do not all apologists simply follow the scriptural example? Despite reading the same text, many intelligent and faithful Christians end up with different conclusions. As will be explored later, this is likely due to their beliefs about humanity. These anthropological assumptions inevitably affect their methodology and aims; thus, the selected apologetic methods will be analyzed along these lines. The rest of this chapter aims to explore the spectrum of contemporary approaches to apologetic methodology and further examine the selected methods' anthropological foundations.

The Extremes & the Middle Path(s): A Spectrum of Views

This section will survey various apologetic methods and categorizations to determine which views will be selected for further in-depth analysis. Since many contemporary apologetic method taxonomies have been offered in recent history, they will be compared alongside each other to present a more complete picture of the current apologetic climate. Perspectives with similar strategies and structures will appropriately be combined into wider categories, and some will be

designated for further examination based on their contemporary relevance and viability as a distinct system and methodology.

Brian Morley undertook a similar objective to classify and categorize apologetic methods, and created a beneficial, yet incomplete, chart of apologetic approaches.⁴ The following page contains a condensed visual graphic of this spectrum with a brief summary of each perspective (fig 1). Although these views will be elaborated on later, they provide a sufficient overview for now. The location of each perspective on the spectrum is crucial to understanding each view. They are organized by increasing emphasis on objective, independently existing evidence. Two extremes enclose the spectrum: *fideism* and *rationalism*. On one extreme, faith is independent of reason, while on the other, faith is completely supported by reason. *Presuppositionalism* assumes God, as there can be no direct *independently existing* proof; so, the system resides next to fideism – even if their claims of absolute certainty mirror the other side of the spectrum. *Reformed Epistemology* holds that faith is a properly basic belief, a type of direct knowing; although some rational arguments may be employed, none of them are warranted grounds for belief in God. *Experientialism* and *Pragmatism* each offer one independent ground for justified belief – i.e. experience and workability, respectively – hence their placement above the others. While experience tends to be more subjective, workability is more objective. *Veridicalism* accepts intuitive givens (like the prior views) and verification through evidence or reason (like the ensuing views).

⁴ Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 13–26.

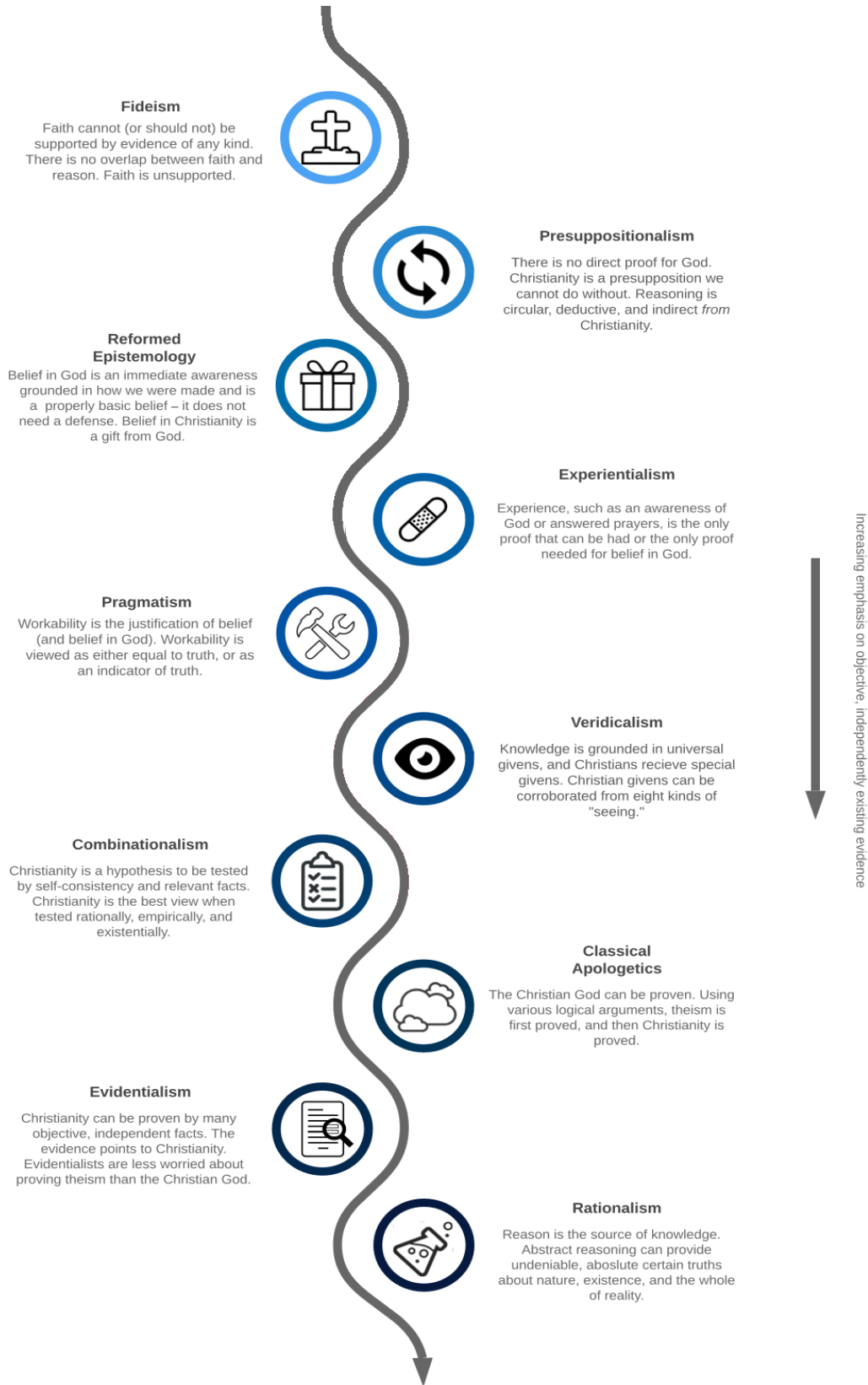


Figure 1. Infographic adapting Brian Morley's Spectrum of Apologetic Views.

As the chart moves on, there is less an emphasis on intuitions and more an emphasis on objective evidence. *Combinationalism*'s three tests for truth – rational, empirical, and existential – provides more criteria for the proof of Christianity than the previous perspectives.⁵ *Classical Apologetics* embraces various arguments and evidences for theism and Christianity. However, in this system, “worldview determines the interpretation of facts.”⁶ In contrast, *Evidentialism* claims that the facts and evidence they provide suggests the correct interpretation — regardless of worldview. The boundaries of fideism and rationalism orient the majority of systematic apologetic methodologies, at least according to Morley.

Steven B. Cowan's *Five Views on Apologetics* is perhaps the categorization schema *du jour* of apologetic perspectives. The work offers five familiar views on apologetic method from well-known advocates: Classical, Evidential, Presuppositional, Reformed Epistemology, and Cumulative Case.⁷ These five comprise the extremes, or outer boundaries, of Morley's spectrum.⁸ Regardless of recent developments in apologetic methodology, often this framework comprises the only approaches that are offered to students or those who wish to defend their faith. Any approach *via media* is often neglected or trivialized. Based on popularity and utility, however, these methods cover the vast majority of apologetics practiced today, at least in the

⁵ Clarification may be needed here: There seems to be two types of understandings when it comes to *Combinationalism* as an apologetic methodology. Morley's understanding is that of approaches by apologists such as E.J. Carnell, Gordon Lewis, or Francis Schaeffer, as explored above. The term is also occasionally used as any approach that combines different apologetic methodologies, but this should not be confused with Morley's categorization. For an example of the former, see Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948).

⁶ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 24.

⁷ Steven B. Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000).

⁸ Although Cumulative Case is not listed on Morley's spectrum, it shares similarities with Classical and Evidential apologetic approaches as previously mentioned. So, it would be located near that extreme on his spectrum.

Western world. Yet, this taxonomy remains incomplete — even the proponents within the work criticize the editors’ selected methods.⁹

For comparison, Joshua Chatraw and Mark Allen provide another categorization schema for apologetic methodologies. The methods can be broken up into four quadrants, each with a *hard* and *soft* variant. According to them, the main apologetic methodologies can be explained by these four: (1) Classical Apologetics, (2) Evidential Apologetics, (3) Presuppositional Apologetics, and (4) Experiential/Narrative Apologetics (E/N).¹⁰ The leftmost quadrants, i.e. classical and evidential apologetics, are characterized by optimism towards reason apart from special revelation — and vice versa. Furthermore, they include Reformed Epistemology and Cumulative Case as separate prominent approaches, solely because they are not as defined in method as the others.¹¹ *Hard* variants are rigid in their methodologies, whereas *soft* variants are more eclectic and see other approaches as cogent and valid.¹² This distinction greatly clarifies many of the inner tensions of each system. While most of the approaches are familiar thus far, E/N offers another unique perspective.¹³ This approach emphasizes the particular framework that a person is in, which grounds their evidence and reasoning, and is suspicious against human’s reasoning capabilities — similar to presuppositionalists.¹⁴ However, E/N apologists — unlike

⁹ For example, William Lane Craig humorously suggests the surprise of the editors in realizing their views are not so different after all! See William Lane Craig, “A Classical Apologist’s Response” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, 122.

¹⁰ Josh Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic: 2018), 145.

¹¹ Chatraw and Allen, 145.

¹² Chatraw and Allen.

¹³ An E/N approach differs slightly from experientialism on Morley’s spectrum. Pure experientialism is more of an extreme version of E/N and doesn’t include a narrative focus. While E/N is commonly practiced today and has gained a fair share of proponents, pure experientialism is rare. However, it would likely be located at a similar place on the spectrum.

¹⁴ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 162–163.

presuppositionalists — invite the nonbeliever into a story and experience.¹⁵ There are no proofs or rationalistic arguments. Rather, the nonbeliever is asked to try an experience and a grand narrative is illuminated. Depending on one’s definition of apologetics, one may or may not even consider an E/N approach as apologetics at all!¹⁶ Even though E/N has grown in recent years, especially as a response to postmodernism, the specific methods offered are usually marked by diversity, so a sustained and cohesive study of this approach remains to be seen.¹⁷

However, an important distinction should be made regarding E/N methods and the use of narrative or testimony in apologetics. Narrative is a type of communication or delivery method that diverse people utilize. For example, Braxton Hunter’s fiction novel argues for the existence of God through classical apologetic arguments and methodology.¹⁸ More well-known authors, such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky or C.S. Lewis, tackle apologetic issues through storied medium as well. Stories, C.S. Lewis contemplated, “can mediate imaginative life to the masses while not being contemptible to the few.”¹⁹ A narrative approach is supplemental to other apologetic approaches, but is not necessarily a distinct system.²⁰ Similarly, the use of testimony in apologetics is less of a system and more of a medium or supplement, as it is commonly recognized as an apologetic tool by various apologetic methods.²¹ For example, Nabeel Qureshi,

¹⁵ Chatraw and Allen.

¹⁶ For example, John Warwick Montgomery refers to these apologists as “non-apologetic apologists.” See Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 28.

¹⁷ Benno van den Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 4–5.

¹⁸ Braxton Hunter, *The Chronicles of Adonai: The Colony* (San Antonio: Trinity Academic Press, 2016).

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis, “On Stories” in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (New York: Harper Collins, 2017), 18.

²⁰ McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 8.

²¹ See, for example, Norman Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009).

an ex-Muslim, practices apologetics through the sharing of his journey of becoming Christian.²² Nevertheless, in his story and testimony resides other arguments for the faith. Most apologetic approaches incorporate the use of narrative or testimony among other, more prominent, tools. Thus, narrative and testimony as supplemental tools are distinct from an E/N methodology.

Certainly, there is no shortage of apologetic approaches. They are as diverse as fruit, each providing their own texture, flavor, and color. However, the list must be narrowed down to allow for proper examination. Thus, specific criteria must be met for inclusion. For the approach to be further analyzed, it must

- (a) be currently utilized in contemporary settings,
 - (b) include one or many specific or actionable methodologies,
 - (c) hold several notable proponents or adherents,
- and
- (d) be an established system (and not a tool or medium).²³

All the aforementioned apologetic approaches will be filtered through these criteria. To begin, rationalism will be excluded based on (a) and (c). Although some adapted models remain infrequently, rationalism *tout court* is rare. Morley disregards both pure experientialism and pragmatism for his own consideration since there are very few notable works and adherents supporting or outlining the claims, and thus, these will be excluded on account of (c).²⁴ Verificationism, a category that includes veridicalism and combinationalism, is often characterized as a mixture of presuppositionalist and traditional apologetic methodologies, and while it does offer some unique contributions and perspectives, it will be not be included due to

²² Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 17–18.

²³ These limitations were developed and explained in the first chapter.

²⁴ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 20.

(c).²⁵ Due to the nature of Verificationism, however, much of the following research will directly apply to these views. Narrative and Testimonial Apologetics will not be included on basis of (d) since they are simply tools or mediums for persuasion across various approaches — they are not standalone systems. The use of narrative and testimony, though, will be substantially discussed in the following sections.

Fideism may be harder to categorize.²⁶ Most apologists view fideism as a *denial* of apologetics. If apologetics is defense of the faith through *reason* alone, then, evidently, this would be true. However, this is not to say that their method may not defend the faith — perhaps just not defend it well or in the same way. The idea of faith as a blind leap is appealing to some. How one defines “defense” will nonetheless influence their view of fideism. Whether technically apologetics or not, many claim it as at least biblically inadequate.²⁷ Even Jesus, for example, offers arguments or grounds for belief (cf. Ac. 1:3; 17:31; Lk. 24:27). Fideistic apologetic approaches are rare, and commonly claimed proponents — such as Blaise Pascal or Tertullian — are usually misidentified as fideists.²⁸ Thus, fideism will not be included on account of a mixture of (a), (b), and (c); even if some are debatable.

Alvin Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology, similarly, is an interesting case. Although it fulfills the criteria for (a), (c), and (d), the question of methodology complicates the matter. His

²⁵ James Bielby, “Varieties of Apologetics,” in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Christian Sources*, 37.

²⁶ The history of the term “fideism” is marked by controversy on its meaning. This label is hardly self-applied and functions similarly to the term “relativism” where the purpose is often not for clarity but for abuse. See Richard Amesbury, “Fideism”, *The Stanford Handbook of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalt. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/fideism/>.

²⁷ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 25–26.

²⁸ See, for example, Norman Geisler and Paul Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic: 1987), 262.

perspective should be explored: How do we know that other people have minds, that they are not just elaborate robots? How do we know that the universe was not created five minutes ago with fabricated memories and the look of old age? There is no elaborate argument or evidence for it, it is something one simply believes; this is a *basic belief*, i.e. that which can be justifiably held without the need to appeal for arguments or proofs.²⁹ Plantinga argues that belief in God can be *properly basic*. In other words, belief in God is warranted and justified whether or not one has or accepts evidence for it. Warrant is an important concept for Plantinga, as it is what distinguishes between knowledge and true belief. In order for something to have warrant, the belief must be produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties, in a cognitive environment appropriate for the faculties, and with a design that is successfully aimed towards truth (whether that be God or even guided evolution).³⁰

Plantinga creates two models for this known as the A/C and Extended A/C model.³¹ The A/C model focuses on John Calvin's idea of the *sensus divinitas*, i.e. humans natural knowledge of God or sense of the divine, and Thomas Aquinas' view of knowledge of God as implanted by nature. Although Plantinga disagrees with the implantation concept, he recognizes the *sensus divinitas* as a sort of cognitive faculty that produces these beliefs about God.³² This process meets all of Plantinga's requirements for warrant, as stated previously, but is still affected by the

²⁹ John D. Laing, "Introduction to New Atheism: Apologetics and the Legacy of Alvin Plantinga", *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 54 (1): 6–12, 9.

³⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 25–28.

³¹ Plantinga, 30–56.

³² Kevin Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response* (. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 137–139.

fall and sin. For this reason, he develops his Extended A/C model, where he explains specific Christian theological beliefs with the elements of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and faith.³³

Plantinga's insights offered a radically different approach to apologetics. Reformed Epistemology differs from methods that focus on rational argumentation or evidence for belief.³⁴ For Plantinga, these are not needed for justified belief. Although he sees faith as a properly basic belief, Plantinga nonetheless highlights the importance of both *positive apologetics*, i.e. supporting beliefs with arguments for the Christian God, and *negative apologetics*, i.e. responding to critiques against Christianity.³⁵ In fact, he even goes on to offer his own arguments, such as his famous free will defense.³⁶ Regardless, Reformed Epistemology emphasizes how a person can be justified in their faith *without the need* for supporting evidence.³⁷ Although it is technically an apologetic approach because it shows that Christian belief can be warranted, it excludes a specific practical methodology. As the name denotes, it is rather an *epistemology*. Thus, it will be excluded on account of (b).

The remaining apologetic approaches can be condensed into wider categories since their strategies and structures are related. For example, while there are different types of Presuppositionalism — such as the unique approaches from Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, and Gordon Clark — the general approach is shared.³⁸ Thus, these approaches will be combined for

³³ Kevin Diller, 148–151.

³⁴ William Edgar, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, Vol. 1 (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 4.

³⁵ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 135.

³⁶ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, & Evil* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 7–59.

³⁷ Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, 39–41.

³⁸ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 59–74.

use of analysis and critique. Any instances where the individual intricacies or nuances matter for the critique will be highlighted. The categorizations include three views: *Presuppositionalism*, containing all of the approaches that argue *from* God as a presupposition; *Traditional Apologetics*, including Evidentialism, Classical Apologetics, Cumulative Case, and similar views that argue *to* God; and *Experiential/Narrative Apologetics*, including the various proponents that form this elusive category. Now that the disparate views have been explored and selected, the remaining apologetic approaches will be summarized and subsequently examined by how their anthropological understandings affect their methodology.

Presuppositionalism

Nearing the top of Morley's spectrum, presuppositionalism resides among views with a decreased emphasis on objective, independently existing evidence. Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, and John Frame comprise some of the most cited and influential presuppositionalists. Their commitments to Calvinism prompt their methodology; so, a Reformed view of God and Scripture is usually necessary for their approach.³⁹ Each provide his own nuances and differences, but often agree on essential concepts — summarized by adherence to belief in the triune God as a necessary presupposition.⁴⁰

³⁹ Morley, 65.

⁴⁰ Van Til asserts this presupposition as the triune God of the Scriptures, whereas Gordon Clark would also emphasize the laws of logic, specifically the law of (non)contradiction. Later in his life, Clark's epistemology and methodology shifted towards Scripturalism, the view that truth can only be deduced from the Bible, even before God, since Scripture provides the knowledge about God. For the shift in Clark's views, see Ronald Nash, *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1968), 173–174. For Clark's view of Scripture relating to the knowledge of God, see Gordon H. Clark, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1993), 72.

“A truly Protestant apologetic,” Cornelius Van Til insists, “must make it’s beginning from the presupposition that the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, speaks to him with absolute authority in Scripture.”⁴¹ For adherents of this view, Christianity is a presupposition that cannot be done without. Since humankind is fallen and suffers the *noetic* effects of sin — i.e. the effects of sin on the mind which governs interpretation — all unbelievers presuppose their own autonomy and are biased against God.⁴² Unbelief is a matter of rebellion, not ignorance. The unbeliever actively suppresses their knowledge of God; they resist dependence on God.⁴³ Every person interprets facts from their own worldview and presuppositions. Thus, there is not enough common ground for believers and unbelievers to reason on.

The extent of this common ground is debated among presuppositionalists.⁴⁴ Van Til holds that the only common ground is that they live in the same universe run by the same God — their metaphysical situation, so to speak — but there are no common notions or beliefs to be interacted with. Since all facts are interpreted by a worldview, believers and unbelievers necessarily have no overlap in epistemological grounds, even if psychologically there is apparent or “formal” overlap in beliefs. The truth nonbelievers know is considered “borrowed capital,” as it only makes sense within Christianity as the presupposition. John Frame disagrees. For him, knowledge is not all or nothing like Van Til argues: believers and unbelievers can truly

⁴¹ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955), 179.

⁴² Van Til, 119.

⁴³ Cornelius Van Til and William Edgar (ed.), *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955), 118–119.

⁴⁴ For Frames’ critique of Van Til, see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987), 52–53. For more on Van Til’s perspective, see Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 73–77, 94.

communicate and hold overlap in beliefs, otherwise nonbelievers would have an excuse for ignorance, and not have access to rational discussion or persuasion

For stricter presuppositionalists like Van Til, traditional apologetics is abhorrent, then, since theistic arguments and evidences make humans the arbiters of truth rather than God, and any additional knowledge of God would be met with rebellion and the suppression of the truth.⁴⁵ Rather than appealing to “common notions” of the unbeliever and believer, apologists should appeal to the only common ground: their (suppressed) knowledge of God and their metaphysical situation.⁴⁶ In this way, apologetics reflects confirmation bias more than an objective search for truth. Facts are not being objectively analyzed; one’s worldview and commitments interprets facts a certain way.

Presuppositionalist methodology confronts the unbeliever with a *reductio ad absurdum*, i.e. an argument that leads a position to its logically absurd conclusion.⁴⁷ God is a precondition for knowledge, thus, denial of God is absurd. Attempts to persuade through neutral reason are misguided. Evidently, nonbelievers can and do use logic and reason, but their worldview cannot account for what they are doing; there is an inconsistency in their utilization of logic and reason with their presuppositions.⁴⁸ As Van Til succinctly asserts, “unless you believe in God you can logically believe in nothing else.”⁴⁹ This is an indirect proof for God: although God cannot be

⁴⁵ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 67, 72.

⁴⁶ Cornelius Van Til, “My Credo,” in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E.R. Geehan (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1993), 21.

⁴⁷ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 68–69.

⁴⁸ Greg Bahnsen, “A Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence” in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, 161.

⁴⁹ Cornelius Van Til, “Why I Believe in God” in *The Works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895–1987*, ed. Eric Sigward (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1997), Guide number 1976.e.

directly proven, belief in God is necessary for experience and thought.⁵⁰ All reasoning is circular reasoning — the premises, the methods, and the conclusions are inevitably intertwined.⁵¹

Believers presuppose truth, and hence, their conclusions are true. For Van Til, this approach will necessarily offend since nonbelievers should be confronted on their rebellion and self-idolatry.⁵²

Van Til and Frame exemplify the difference between *hard* presuppositionalism and a *soft* presuppositionalism. Hard presuppositionalists reject all use of direct proof and arguments, whereas soft presuppositionalists see no difference in direct or indirect proof, thus allowing for classical and evidentialist arguments.⁵³ Frame allows for traditional apologetic reasoning, but only when aimed at transcendental goals: “God is the condition of all meaning... but that conclusion cannot be reached in a single, simple syllogism. A transcendental argument normally, perhaps always, requires many subarguments, and some of these may be traditional proofs or Christian evidences.”⁵⁴ The ostensible similarities in dialogue and method between soft presuppositionalists and traditional apologists, then, appear indistinguishable. Hence, Frame suggests a “presuppositionalism of the heart” — the attitude of a person who understands God as the sovereign source of all rationality and meaning, that all people are biased, and that nonbelievers rebel against God. This attitude is expressed in dialogue with the nonbeliever — through diction, tone, and personal piety — and by allying with all apologists who posture

⁵⁰ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 69–70.

⁵¹ Van Til and Edgar, *Christian Apologetics*, 130.

⁵² Van Til, “Why I Believe in God” in *The Works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895–1987*, Guide number 1976.e.

⁵³ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 159–161.

⁵⁴ John Frame, “A Presuppositional Apologist’s Closing Remarks” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, 360.

similarly, regardless of affiliation.⁵⁵ Instead of a preoccupation with apologetic methodology, as Van Til is often criticized of, Frame's approach promotes developing arguments to address nonbelievers and thus fulfill the Great Commission.⁵⁶

Presuppositionalist anthropology is found primarily through their reading of Scripture. Unsurprisingly, this begins in the creation narrative. Humanity was created in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:27), but this is true in two senses: (1) in a wider view, humans reflect God's image as they are personalities, i.e. they are like God in any way that creatures can be like God; and (2) in a narrower view, in which humanity was created with true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.⁵⁷ Christ comes to restore in humans the true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.⁵⁸ Paul testifies of the new self that is "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" and is "being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (cf. Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). Certainly, God's knowledge exceeds that of his creation, but before the fall humans fully understood the revelation of God *promensura humana*, i.e. within human's finite capacity.⁵⁹ Humanity was created to relate to the universe in three ways: interpreting the world as a *Prophet*, dedicating the world to God as a *Priest*, and ruling over the world as *King*.⁶⁰ The fall of humanity represents the desire to be independent of God; this autonomy confused finitude with sin and

⁵⁵ John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1994), 87–89.

⁵⁶ John Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1995), 400.

⁵⁷ Van Til and Edgar, *Christian Apologetics*, 40.

⁵⁸ Van Til and Edgar.

⁵⁹ Van Til and Edgar, 41.

⁶⁰ Van Til and Edgar, 41–42.

perpetuates the idolatry of the self.⁶¹ Paul's explanation of humanity's condition in Romans 1:18-22 (NRSV) reflects this autonomy:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness *suppress the truth*. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So *they are without excuse*; for though *they knew God, they did not honor him as God* or give thanks to him, but they *became futile in their thinking*, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.⁶²

Although God and his divine attributes are tacitly believed, the gospel remains misunderstood and obscure (cf. Rom. 10:14-15).⁶³ Salvation, as would be consistent with Reformed theology, is not dependent on persons, but on God alone; the gospel is not to be accepted or rejected as they please.⁶⁴ Regardless of the pluralistic state of the world, there are really only two religions humans have to decide upon.⁶⁵ As Paul explores, there is only the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-2:16). Furthermore, due to humanity's self-bondage and rebellion, God must empower unbelievers to accept salvation (Rom. 9:14-23; Eph. 2:8).⁶⁶

Presuppositionalists' view of humanity and Scripture (in)directly correlate to their method. Since the fall of humanity affects their cognitive faculties and influences their desire for autonomy, people are in a state of rebellion against God. The depth of this rebellion is so

⁶¹ Van Til and Edgar, 43–46.

⁶² Emphasis mine.

⁶³ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 106.

⁶⁴ Van Til and Edgar, *Christian Apologetics*, 51–52.

⁶⁵ Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 121.

⁶⁶ See Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 148.

immense that they subdue the truth they already hold; they do not need to be confronted with traditional proofs and arguments for the faith — they already believe! The only way to confront the unbeliever is by their presuppositions. The dissonance within the nonbeliever’s own belief system points to the necessity of God. To deny recognition of God as the necessary presupposition to all thought is to head for nihilism or a less consistent worldview living off of borrowed capital.⁶⁷ While the defense of the faith is made through the transcendental argument, salvation is solely a gift from God. Whether or not the sinner accepts the Christian worldview is a matter of the grace of God.⁶⁸

A few assumptions appear to inundate presuppositionalist approaches. First, the primary goal of presuppositionalist apologetics is to demonstrate that *Christian belief is true*.⁶⁹ This is evinced through the transcendental argument. Defending the faith, then, means that the Christian worldview be shown as necessary and true. Of course, salvation comes solely from God, thus, conversion does not come from presenting the Christian worldview as true. Rather, presuppositionalist apologetics merely indicates the truth of the worldview. Second, humans are seen primarily as *believing* creatures. Humans (as *believers*) are defined by their beliefs, allegiances, and commitments that orient their life. Before any ideas or thoughts, beliefs are already assumed — people’s worldviews are pre-rational.⁷⁰ Humans do not simply need a slight adjustment to their ideas or thoughts — they need a radical subversion of their whole belief system and worldview.

⁶⁷ R.C Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts that Shape Our World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 169–171.

⁶⁸ Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 149–150.

⁶⁹ James Bielby, “Varieties of Apologetics,” 30–34.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 43–44.

Traditional Apologetics

Nearing the bottom of Morley’s spectrum, traditional apologetics resides among views with an increased emphasis on objective, independently existing evidence. A variety of Christian thinkers comprise this field, including William Lane Craig, Norman Geisler, J.P. Moreland, Gary Habermas, Michael Licona, John Warwick Montgomery, Paul Feinberg, and C.S. Lewis. These methods, contrary to presuppositionalism, argue *to* God as the conclusion.⁷¹ All of these proponents would utilize several arguments for the existence of the Christian God — whether by theistic arguments, historical evidences, religious experiences, or a combination of them — although it is accomplished in different ways. Classical and evidential approaches offer standalone arguments as *proof* of the Christian God, whereas a cumulative case approach defends the Christian God through a collection of interdependent evidences and arguments.⁷²

Classical apologetics tends to follow a succinct method: prove theism, then Christianity.⁷³ The approach is a two-step process. The classical apologist begins with the common ground — i.e. shared beliefs — between believers and nonbelievers.⁷⁴ If the nonbeliever interacts with science, philosophy, and history, then what better place for the apologist to ground their arguments? A nonbeliever likely embraces sense perception, self evidence, and common modes of reasoning.⁷⁵ Thus, common ground comprises of shared beliefs and methodologies, such as

⁷¹ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 288.

⁷² Gary Habermas, “An Evidentialist’s Response,” in *Five Views of Apologetics*, 184–185.

⁷³ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 48.

⁷⁴ Common ground in traditional apologetics is not akin to the Van Tillian presuppositionalist view of common ground as metaphysical situation alone. Rather, it is identical to what presuppositionalists call “common notions,” i.e. beliefs believers and nonbelievers have in common. For more on this, see n44.

⁷⁵ Craig, 51; cited by Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 227.

deduction, induction, Bayes' theorem, possible world semantics, and understandings of the law of contradiction, necessity, and contingency.⁷⁶ The classical apologist appeals to widely accepted facts, common sense, unbiased (or anti-Christian) expert testimony, and propounds a cumulative case of arguments.⁷⁷ William Lane Craig also briefly suggests that arational conditions, such as courteousness or genuine concern, may affect persuasiveness and that the ultimate apologetic is one's life, i.e. their relationship with God and others.⁷⁸

Craig distinguishes between *knowing* the faith to be true, and *showing* the faith to be true.⁷⁹ A Christian *knows* their beliefs to be true because they are properly basic based on the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, even though rational arguments may confirm the faith.⁸⁰ However, evidences and arguments demonstrate that the Christian worldview is the most plausible option by showing the faith to be true.⁸¹ The apologetic task, then, is *showing* the faith to be true by the

⁷⁶ Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics*, 55

⁷⁷ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 56. Craig's recommendation of a cumulative case of arguments does not equate to cumulative case apologetics. This has caused confusion around methodology. Both classical and evidential apologists employ multiple arguments for the defense of the faith; in this sense, cumulative case simply means using many different arguments instead of just one. Paul Feinberg, in contrast, represents a cumulative case apologist who builds a specific methodology around informal arguments from various (equally prioritized) experiences to reveal the Christian God as the best explanation of all evidence. Chatraw and Allen, more confusingly, revise cumulative case to mean any apologetic methodology that emphasizes the multiplicity of ways to make a case for the Christian faith, not solely multiple arguments, nor a specific approach like Feinberg, but rather an openness to multiple approaches to the defense of the faith. For more on their perspective, see Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 145–147, 172–173. For more on the differences between classical/evidentialist approaches and Feinberg, see Paul D. Feinberg, William Lane Craig, and Gary R. Habermas, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 148–194.

⁷⁸ Craig, 56, 405–407.

⁷⁹ Although this dichotomy is not necessarily shared by all classical apologists, it represents an important and useful distinction. See: Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 253.

⁸⁰ William Lane Craig, "Classical Apologetics" in *Five Views on Apologetics*, 54.

⁸¹ Craig, 54.

two-step approach. The step order (usually) matters for classical apologists. However, this issue would be what separates *hard* classical apologists from *soft* classical apologists.⁸²

Hard classical apologists, such as Norman Geisler, assert that proving theism first is *necessary*; without this first step, historical arguments hold no meaning since they are understood through an atheistic worldview.⁸³ The theistic worldview is what makes the resurrection a relevant and significant event. *Soft* classical apologists, such as William Lane Craig, believe there may be cases where historical evidences may lead to direct belief in the Christian God; so while it is not a necessary order, he believes the classical approach as being more effective.⁸⁴ In fact, soft classical apologists and soft evidential apologists — who allow or utilize theistic arguments — become hard to distinguish. Craig suggests that rather than being separate methodologies, they are “merely a personally preferred style of argumentation.”⁸⁵

Classical apologists utilize a variety of arguments to prove theism. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek offer four popular evidences for theism: (1) the beginning of the universe, via the cosmological argument; (2) the design of the universe, via the teleological argument and anthropic principle; (3) the design of life, via the teleological argument; and (4) moral law, via the moral argument.⁸⁶ A few classical apologists also utilize an adapted version of the

⁸² Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 145–147.

⁸³ Although this view may seem like presuppositionalism, it is different, despite the apparent concordance on worldview interpreting facts. For the classical apologist, Christian belief is still shown true through evidences and arguments, it simply requires proving theism so people will not dismiss the case. There are objective and rational ways to treat the question of worldview, so although worldview determines interpretation, reason still impacts worldview. See Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 265–266.

⁸⁴ William Lane Craig, “A Classical Apologist’s Closing Remarks,” *Five Views on Apologetics*, 315–316.

⁸⁵ William Lane Craig, “A Classical Apologist’s Response,” *Five Views on Apologetics*, 122.

⁸⁶ For an in-depth examination of these theistic arguments, see Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 73–193.

controversial ontological argument.⁸⁷ Although the ontological argument has revived in recent history, many apologists, such as Geisler, find it problematic, however fascinating.⁸⁸ These arguments are the most prevalent theistic proofs for classical apologists, albeit each apologist explains and nuances the arguments in different ways.

The subsequent strategy argues, alongside evidential apologetics, specifically for the *Christian* God. Most often, this is done through a defense of the resurrection of Jesus, the identity of Jesus, and the historical reliability of the New Testament.⁸⁹ One common approach is the use of abductive logic, which analyzes the available evidence, and then infers the best explanation of the evidence.⁹⁰ The widely accepted facts surrounding the resurrection — such as the empty tomb found by women, the appearances of a living Jesus to various groups and individuals, and the first disciples belief in Jesus without historical Judaic or pagan influences — infer that God raised Jesus from the dead.⁹¹ Craig concludes,

“If these three facts are historically established with a reasonable degree of certainty (and it seems to me that they can, as they are recognized by the majority of New testament critics today) and if alternative naturalistic explanations for these facts are untenable (and the consensus of scholarship is that they are), then unless the resurrection hypothesis is shown to be even more untenable than its failed competitors

⁸⁷ Two notable classical apologists who have defended the ontological argument, or at least their version, are William Lane Craig and Stuart Hackett. For William Lane Craig, see Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 233–235 and Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 183–189. For Stuart Hackett, see Stuart Hackett, *The Resurrection of Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), 184–193.

⁸⁸ Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 30–37. Although first conceived by Anselm of Canterbury, Alvin Plantinga’s modal ontological argument — critiquing modal variations by Charles Hartshorne and Norman Malcolm — renewed interest in the argument. For Plantinga’s modal ontological argument, see Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 85–112 and William L. Rowe, “Alvin Plantinga on the Ontological Argument,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 65 no.2 (2009): 87–92, 89.

⁸⁹ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 146–148.

⁹⁰ Craig, “Classical Apologetics,” 52.

⁹¹ Craig.

(and my experience in debating the comparative merits of the hypotheses convince me that it is not)... [the preferred explanation is that] God raised Jesus from the dead.”⁹²

Geisler and Turek provide a slightly different approach. After proving theism, they argue for the historical reliability of the New Testament first, and then for miraculous confirmations of Jesus’ claims to be God.⁹³ This approach greatly overlaps with evidentialism.

Evidential apologists, in contrast to classical apologists, argue for a one-step approach: they attempt to prove the Christian God. Unsurprisingly, then, their method is ostensibly the same as the classical apologists’ second step. Granted, evidentialists contribute their own unique perspectives. Gary Habermas, for example, slightly changes the oft used *minimal facts approach*. The traditional minimal facts approach argues first through the reliability of the New Testament, and subsequently to supernatural beliefs, e.g. Jesus’ deity, the resurrection, and inspiration of Scripture.⁹⁴ This can be reflected in Geisler and Turek’s view above. The problem with this traditional approach, according to Habermas, is that “it would be difficult to argue from general trustworthiness of the Bible in a way that makes its supernatural claims credible while showing that those of other ancient authors are not.”⁹⁵ So, instead, he argues from five widely-accepted facts surrounding the resurrection, and assesses them with five principles historians use to validate ancient documents.⁹⁶ This approach proves Jesus’ resurrection is the most probable and

⁹² Craig.

⁹³ To be more precise, after proving theism, Geisler and Turek argue that miracles are possible and can be used for confirmation, that the New Testament is historically reliable, that Jesus claimed to be God, and that this is miraculously confirmed. Thus, Jesus is God, and he teaches the Bible to be true. For an in-depth examination of these arguments, appropriately broken up into chapters, see Geisler and Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 197–388.

⁹⁴ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 349.

⁹⁵ Morley, 335.

⁹⁶ Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 36–77.

reasonable explanation of the historical evidence.⁹⁷ Certainly, the classical apologist may utilize Habermas' approach as well.

To the evidentialist, not only can humans approach facts objectively, but facts point to their interpretation.⁹⁸ While nonbelievers may resist facts in sinful autonomy, that does not equate to facts being unconvincing or unable to overcome self-interest.⁹⁹ As previously mentioned, classical apologists, in contrast, believe that facts have no interpretation or meaning outside of a worldview. The classical approach shares more in common with presuppositionalism since a correct framework for reasoning is necessary. Contrarily, the evidentialist asserts a one-step approach because people can analyze the facts and come to the most probable conclusion without needing a specific worldview. The historical facts and evidence points to the truth itself. *Hard* evidentialists, although rare, would resist all classical theistic arguments; *soft* evidentialists such as Gary Habermas, on the other hand, allow or utilize theistic arguments but view them as unnecessary.¹⁰⁰

Gary Feinberg develops the most commonly cited cumulative case apologetic method. According to both Feinberg and Habermas, this cumulative case approach can be seen as a progeny or modification of (soft) evidentialism, and they predominantly agree on the following: the one-step approach, the correspondence of facts to their interpretation (even without a neutral standpoint), the reliability of historical evidences, and multiple means of apologetic defense.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Habermas and Licona, 209.

⁹⁸ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 23.

⁹⁹ John Warwick Montgomery suggests this in an email correspondence. See Morley, 300–301.

¹⁰⁰ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 154–155. Gary Habermas knows of no evidentialists that oppose theistic arguments, see Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 326.

¹⁰¹ See Paul D. Feinberg and Gary R. Habermas, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 129–131, 184. Unlike Habermas, James Beilby perceives cumulative case apologetics as a multi-step approach, rather than a one-step approach like

Additionally, Feinberg incorporates other human experiences, such as “contingency and orderliness; the experience of God’s presence and a relationship with him, which many claim to have had; the existence of a moral law; a revelation that claims to come from God; and prophecies that are contained in this revelation that are fulfilled.”¹⁰² He proposes seven prevalent tests for truth that resolve conflicting truth claims: the tests of consistency, correspondence, comprehensiveness, simplicity, livability, fruitfulness, and conservation.¹⁰³ Given these tests for truth, Feinberg concludes that the Christian worldview offers the best explanation given all the evidence. The uniqueness of this perspective is that rather than offer several independent arguments for the faith, the strength of the argument is found in the *mosaic*, or interdependent connectivity, of the various arguments.¹⁰⁴ The burden of proof does not rely on independent arguments, but the combination of them.

evidentialism, since multiple arguments are assembled and converged. Technically, they both can be correct depending on how one defines the steps. It is true that the approach uses several different lines of evidence and experience, in that way it could be considered multi-step. Habermas considers it a one-step approach because the mosaic, or collection of arguments, is offered as one argument for the Christian God — whereas a two-step approach would argue for theism first. It appears that Bielby, however, may lack a proper understanding of cumulative case apologetics. Even though he references Feinberg, Bielby miscategorizes the approach and is inconsistent with his own schema. In his own taxonomy, Feinberg’s cumulative case approach should fall under an *eclectic approach*, rather than solely an evidentialist strategy, since it utilizes an experiential strategy alongside historical evidences. For this reason, Habermas’ understanding is chosen and preferred. For Bielby’s argument and taxonomy, see Bielby, “Varieties of Apologetics, 32–38.

¹⁰² Paul Feinberg, “A Cumulative Case Apologist’s Response,” in *Five Views of Apologetics*, 131.

¹⁰³ Paul Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” in *Five Views of Apologetics*, 153–158.

¹⁰⁴ The mosaic metaphor appropriately portrays the differentiation. While some apologists may offer a single argument, or piece, pointing to the truth of Christianity, a cumulative case approach offers the larger picture or mosaic that is created from all the pieces together. Although, for cumulative case apologists, each particular piece does not need to offer complete proof — the argument is in the picture or mosaic as a *whole*. Other traditional apologists critique this conclusion via the leaky buckets metaphor, i.e. if one leaky bucket cannot hold water, neither can ten. For more on religious experience as piece of the mosaic, see Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 379; quoted in Braxton Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics*, 62. For Norman Geisler’s critique, see Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 129–130. For Feinberg’s defense, see Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” in *Five Views of Apologetics*, 167.

All three of these methods utilize both *positive* and *negative* apologetics.¹⁰⁵ *Positive apologetics* offers reasons and arguments for the faith; all of the aforementioned arguments used by traditional apologists represent this. *Negative apologetics* seeks to defend the faith through answering objections raised against it; perhaps the biggest objection to the faith is the problem of evil, so an apologetic response would fall in this category.¹⁰⁶ Of course, oftentimes arguments may serve a dual-function for both purposes.¹⁰⁷ Norman Geisler's rigorous work, *Christian Apologetics*, exemplifies the interaction of these two. He systematically critiques various tests of truth and worldviews, and offers his own arguments for the Christian faith, while refuting all raised objections in the process.¹⁰⁸

Traditional apologetics is more akin to a legal case than a friendly conversation. Craig mentions that his approach may be “polarizing and combative,” yet this is necessary because “you’re not arguing against another *person*; you’re arguing against his *case*.”¹⁰⁹ When apologetics equates to demonstrating the rationality of the Christian faith to rational creatures,

¹⁰⁵ Cowan, *Five Views of Apologetics*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Plantinga's free will defense remains a viable and prevalent argument against the problem of evil. See Plantinga, *God, Freedom, & Evil*, 7–59.

¹⁰⁷ Craig provides an example: certain defenses against the problem of evil can serve as moral arguments. See Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 23–24.

¹⁰⁸ In *Christian Apologetics*, Part I examines and critiques grounds for testing truth; Part II applies the tests to various worldviews, concluding theism as the proper worldview; and Part III examines the claims of Christianity from a theistic worldview. See Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*.

¹⁰⁹ William Lane Craig, “#334 Are Debates Too Polarizing?”, last modified September 9, 2013. <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/are-debates-too-polarizing>. In a response to a long-winded question regarding his debates being polarizing, Craig responds with helpful insights into his methodology. Even though the question is framed in reference to formal debates, Craig discusses “other forums of truth-seeking.” This is not to say Craig would necessarily be combative if, say, a young college student approach him one-on-one asking about the faith. Rather, this would likely be slipping into the field of evangelism for Craig, which is more personal, emotional, and so on. When he offers and critiques arguments, however, it is surely de-personalizing and presented like a case.

the approach is “by nature *de-personalizing*.”¹¹⁰ This de-personalization is perhaps why soft traditional apologists resist a more rigid approach and, rather, include other methods sporadically, like narrative apologetics, in order to impact more people. Cumulative Case apologists, for example, add religious and human experiences to the persuasion among logical or historical evidences, in order to present every possible fact for the unbeliever.¹¹¹ Montgomery also identifies a growing number of “tender-minded” people who see life in more subjective or existential terms, so, he suggests a literary apologetic method in lieu of objective argumentation.¹¹² He concludes stories are effective because they are relevant to life, answering the main needs of humanity: an integrated personality, genuine fellowship, and purpose.¹¹³ For him, this alternative approach may be necessary because many will simply deny even the most obvious conclusion of evidences. Similarly, Craig supplements his positive apologetic work, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, with a brief addendum claiming that the ultimate apologetic is *one’s life*, i.e. relationship with God and others.¹¹⁴ Christians’ love inevitably draws people to Christ. When engaged in apologetic dialogue, especially, there are existential considerations that make an argument persuasive. Craig, for this reason, alludes to arational factors (as previously mentioned) and encourages presenting arguments alongside the gospel and a personal testimony.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Craig.

¹¹¹ Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics*, 62–63.

¹¹² Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 319–320.

¹¹³ Morley, 320–321.

¹¹⁴ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 405–407.

¹¹⁵ Craig, 23.

The main concerns of traditional apologetic anthropology are the human condition (and solution), human knowledge, and the nature of human beings. Although the exact anthropological understandings slightly differ among the various proponents of traditional apologetics, there is enough overlap to present a unique and cohesive view — especially separate from presuppositionalism and experiential/narrative apologetics. For traditional apologists, humans are essentially *rational* beings, reflecting the nature of God.¹¹⁶ The *imago dei* endowed humans with reason, moral action, and self-determination, among other debatable qualities.¹¹⁷ This requires human beings to possess some form of free will, power, and knowledge.¹¹⁸ Cartesian dualism and the possibility of disembodiment are usually held by traditional apologists.¹¹⁹ This is unsurprising, given the lingering influence of rationalism on traditional apologetics.¹²⁰

The role of reason in apologetics is nuanced within their view of the human condition and human knowledge. Without the help of the Spirit, humans would never become followers of Christ: people, left to themselves, do not seek God (Rom 3:10-11); they cannot understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14); and they are antagonistic towards God (Rom 8:7).¹²¹ The Spirit constantly draws the nonbeliever, continually convicting him/her so all people know the truth of

¹¹⁶ Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 303.

¹¹⁷ J.P. Moreland, *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei: Human Persons and the Failure of Naturalism* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 4–5. See also William Lane Craig, “Doctrine of Man (Part 2)”, last modified September 23, 2013, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-2/s2-doctrine-of-man/doctrine-of-man-part-2>.

¹¹⁸ Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), x; cited in Brian Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*, 199.

¹¹⁹ Moreland, *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei*, 104–142.

¹²⁰ McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 12–17, esp. 16–17.

¹²¹ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 46–47.

God's existence and their position before him (John 16:7-11).¹²² Arguments and evidences for the Christian God will never "reason" people into the faith.¹²³ Thus, if a person refuses to come to Christ, it is not simply because of a deficiency in knowledge, but a suppression or ignoring of the Spirit's drawing; evidence and arguments cannot transform a hostile and closed heart.¹²⁴ As Geisler and Turek frame it, there is "a difference between *proving* a proposition and *accepting* a proposition."¹²⁵ There is freedom to accept or reject the faith. There is enough evidence to convince, but God leaves ambiguity to not compel those unwilling.¹²⁶ Regardless, people can help draw others to God. Even if the Spirit alone converts, the Spirit utilizes humans in the process.¹²⁷ This is often done through persuasion or appeals. Their main form of persuasion utilizes arguments and evidences to show the rationality of believing in God — it is an appeal to the nonbeliever's mind. Jesus, too, utilizes argumentation and evidences (cf. Ac. 1:3; 17:31; Lk. 24:27). Whether or not one accepts the arguments, however, does not determine their legitimacy.¹²⁸ But, since the persuasiveness of an argument depends on the individual, arguments should be made to use widely accepted notions.¹²⁹ Regardless, many people do not need arguments to come to the faith.¹³⁰

¹²² Craig. Also see Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 32.

¹²³ Craig, 47. Also see Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 33.

¹²⁴ Craig. Also see Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 35.

¹²⁵ Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 30.

¹²⁶ Geisler and Turek, 31.

¹²⁷ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 407. Also see Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 34.

¹²⁸ Craig, 60.

¹²⁹ Craig, 55–57.

¹³⁰ Craig, 22. For Habermas, see Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 336.

Perhaps the largest internal distinction in anthropology surrounds the controversy of facts and their interpretations, involving human knowledge and the human condition. Evidentialists uphold that the fall did not damage humanity's ability to understand facts, whether religious or not.¹³¹ Adam, indeed, still recognizes God's voice after his sin (Gen 3:8-10). Certainly, humans have sinful biases, but this does not remove their ability to overcome the biases, especially when presented with overwhelming evidence.¹³² Classical apologists, on the contrary, usually hold that worldview determines facts; thus, they must be persuaded to a theistic worldview first. Soft classical approaches align more with the evidentialist's stance. For Geisler, a hard classical apologist, the historical evidences make no sense outside of a theistic worldview.¹³³

A few assumptions appear to inundate these approaches. First, the primary goal of apologetics is to demonstrate the *rationality* of Christian belief.¹³⁴ Defending the faith, in these approaches, means that the Christian worldview be shown as logical, reasonable, and most plausible. Of course, this is usually not the *only* aim, as demonstrating Christianity to be true or that one should commit their life to Christ are often secondary or tertiary goals; yet they are subsequent to the primary aim. As noted earlier, the Christian faith is shown to be true *through* demonstrating its rationality. The logical arguments and evidences are meant to show that the faith is *rational*; believers, nonbelievers, and the general culture should see faith as an intellectually plausible, or the most plausible, option. Traditional apologetics need not always show the faith to be true entirely, unlike presuppositionalists, for showing Christianity as merely

¹³¹ Montgomery, "A Short History of Apologetics," 27.

¹³² Morley, *Mapping Apologetics*, 300–301.

¹³³ Morley, 266.

¹³⁴ Bielby, "Varieties of Apologetics," 30–32. Certainly there are other goals, such as showing Christianity to be true, but this is secondary and subsequent to demonstrating the rationality of Christian belief.

a reasonable option is enough.¹³⁵ Second, the method focuses on humans as *rational* beings. Humans are essentially a mind or consciousness; they are defined mainly by thought and rational operations. This model tends to deny humans as essentially embodied — perhaps occasionally or temporarily, but not essentially — and views the role of emotions or affections as largely irrelevant, if not something to be overcome.¹³⁶ Clearly, this model permeates their apologetic methodology as the mind is primarily appealed to through reason, and the role of reason and cognition in determining both truth and belief is viewed very positively. This will be more apparent in the next section upon comparison since E/N methodologies strongly resist this model for a more holistic view of a human person.

Experiential / Narrativial Apologetics

Experiential and Narrativial apologetics (E/N) represents an interesting counter to the prior fastidious methodologies. The former methodological foci emphasize rationality and presuppositions through detailed argument(s); E/N, in contrast, is usually pessimistic towards these endeavors.¹³⁷ Since this approach is more ill-defined and ambiguous than the others, it can be hard to place proponents into this view confidently and uncritically. However, it will likely include proponents such as Myron Penner, C. Stephen Evans, N.T. Wright, Alister McGrath, and John Stackhouse. Although they are not necessarily contemporary, many E/N thinkers often refer

¹³⁵ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 16–23.

¹³⁶ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 41–43. As previously mentioned, soft traditional apologists are more likely to consider arational factors and means, such as emotion and narrative or testimony, yet these means are for persuasion, and not viewed positively as reliable means of truth outside of reason.

¹³⁷ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 161–162.

to the ideas of Blaise Pascal or Søren Kierkegaard.¹³⁸ Several other recent apologetic works may share commonality, more or less, with this approach: “ad hoc apologetics” of George Lindbeck; “postliberal apologetics” of Meredith Handspicker; “dialogical apologetics” of David Clark; “postmodern apologetics” of Nancy Murphy; “person-centered apologetics” of J.S. Brent and D.E. Chismar; “unapologetic apologetics” of William Placher; “narrative apologetics” of David Clark; “holistic apologetics” of Irving Hexham, Stephen Rost, and John Morehead; and “cross-cultural apologetics” of Benno van den Toren.¹³⁹ Although E/N approaches offer more diversity than within the former apologetic categories, they converge upon shared foci. Several focused themes permeate these approaches: (1) lived experience, (2) narrative or story, (3) appeals to “holistic” and unique persons, (4) limitations of human reason, (5) community, (6) pre-rational factors of belief, (7) apologetic dialogue, (8) methods that appeal to postmodernism or a multi-cultural world, (9) critiques of traditional apologetic methods and epistemologies, and (10) the aim of apologetics as conversion and maturation or edification.¹⁴⁰

Reason itself as an arbiter of truth is questioned in E/N approaches. Thinking is not neutral nor objective for them; all facts must be interpreted through subjective beings. Blaise Pascal

¹³⁸ This may seem alarming, since some view Pascal and Kierkegaard as fideists; but whether or not they were fideists is often a matter of controversy. Norman Geisler holds that Pascal is more of an antirationalist than a fideist, and similarly Kierkegaard as well, except for the fact that he held some fideistic claims. Myron Penner, a E/N apologist, builds his apologetic method from Kierkegaard, rejecting the notion that he is a fideist. He is not opposed to reason, but the *modern* conception of reason. It is exactly the antirationalist thread that I believe E/N approaches adapt. For Geisler’s view, see Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 35–42. For Penner’s view, see Myron Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 10–11. For a more in-depth analysis of Kierkegaard’s epistemology, see M.G. Piety, “Søren Kierkegaard,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology of Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 497–509.

¹³⁹ Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 4–5.

¹⁴⁰ For (1) and (2), see Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 161–163. For (3), (4), (5) see Bielby, “Varieties of Apologetics,” 34–36. For (6), (7), (8), (9), see Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 4–5. For (10), see John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67 and Myron Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 80–81.

famously wrote that “the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing,” and that it is “the heart which perceives God and not the reason.”¹⁴¹ The “heart” for Pascal represents a person’s immediate *intuitions*; before any thoughts, there are the first-principles known by the heart, which all reason is dependent upon.¹⁴² Unlike fideism, this is not a complete dismissal of reason; however, it recognizes the limitations of reason as influenced by other factors. Pascal continues: “Anyone who chose to follow reason alone would have proved himself a fool... Reason never wholly overcomes imagination, while the contrary is quite common.”¹⁴³ Reason is subsumed by the heart and passions — it cannot be the whole ground for truth; this explains how Pascal can claim that uneducated and unintelligent people may be more certain of spiritual and existential truths than many who are educated and intelligent.¹⁴⁴ Reason helps make sense of the world and revelation, but it is not the sole grounds for truth or the gospel.¹⁴⁵ Pascal’s wager actually reveals the inherent biases within a person: if it is wiser to believe in God, why not believe?¹⁴⁶ Humans are naturally biased either for or against God, and reason cannot decide the truth, so one should be biased towards God.

¹⁴¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, loc. 423–424.

¹⁴² Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 228.

¹⁴³ Pascal, *Pensées*, loc. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 150.

¹⁴⁵ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 161–163. Kierkegaard’s distinction between Geniuses and Apostles highlight this point. The genius, or expert, is the highest intellectual authority in modernity; reason is the grounds for truth in this framework. Apostles, however, appeal to revelation and not reason. He combats the notion that reason or geniuses can offer truth. Reason may help one understand the apostle’s proclamation, but it cannot ground their message. For more on this, see Myron Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 49–66, 170.

¹⁴⁶ Pascal’s wager, succinctly, proposes that if someone chooses God and is wrong, he/she loses nothing; and if right, reaps eternal life. However, if instead he/she does not choose God, and is right, they gain nothing; but if he/she is wrong, there are dire consequences.

Humans are comprised of prejudices, emotions, will, and imagination — all which affect reasoning. A holistic human is “a social, emotional, religious, and cultural entity, with certain drives and living in a specific context.”¹⁴⁷ These complex drives and contexts of a human shape identity and decisions.¹⁴⁸ For example, Kierkegaard claims that obedience to God is grounded on passionate love, a desire that causes action; a zeal for propositions will *not* lead to such action.¹⁴⁹ The identity and decision of the obedient Christian is formed through their desire and direction of love towards God. Reason is situated within the unique commitments that shapes the framework for how people think, act, and believe.¹⁵⁰ There is no neutral starting point — reason and truth are always caught up in a social context alongside assumptions, presuppositions, practices, and vocabularies which influence them.¹⁵¹ In this way, modernistic understandings of reason, and thus traditional apologetics, may actually be *harmful* to defense of the faith.¹⁵² For example, apologetics may perpetuate systematic or ideological violence, since it can be overcome by the “powers of the prevailing culture.”¹⁵³ Whereas traditional apologists focus more

¹⁴⁷ Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Toren, 24.

¹⁴⁹ Sproul, *Consequences of Ideas*, 154.

¹⁵⁰ Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 74.

¹⁵¹ Penner, 130.

¹⁵² David K. Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics: A Person-Centered Approach to Christian Defense* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 103–104. This is a very common theme of E/N approaches, however they all tend to offer different reasons. For Kierkegaard, this use of reason has the opposite effect, as “thought moves existence away from the real.” Thought will never lead to what is real — it must be the opposite. See Sproul, *Consequences of Ideas*, 155. For Penner arguments have an ethical aspect that can be violent, see Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 9–12, 148–163. Stackhouse resists apologetic dialogue that is a “destructive exercise in triumphalism.” See Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, xi.

¹⁵³ Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 157–159.

on the *content* of argumentation, E/N apologists emphasize the *way* or *style* of apologetic dialogue, for this reason.¹⁵⁴

Truths ineluctably “come to us in story form and must be embraced and lived out in order to be truly understood.”¹⁵⁵ This epistemological model rejects reason as tantamount in seeking truth. The truth is not a set of propositions or ideas to mentally ascend to; the faith (and thus truth) must be lived and embodied.¹⁵⁶ A comical metaphor may render this presumption more comprehensible: Imagine a desperate and libidinous young man, pining for companionship, craftily constructing his dating profile to fulfill his desires. In an attempt to be genuine, he scrupulously writes out everything that can be said about himself. Given an infinite time frame, he finally finishes the task. To his horror, he realizes there is still something missing about himself — his existence. Even though all the facts about himself are written out and understood, it is not truly *him*. Existence cannot be thought or conceived — it must be *lived*. Similarly, being a Christian is much less about *knowing* the truth than *becoming* the truth; it is a *way* rather than a *position*.¹⁵⁷ Knowledge of the truth follows from *being* the truth.¹⁵⁸ Thus, traditional arguments or proofs for God are asinine — a fool’s endeavor.¹⁵⁹ Instead, Christians should invite people to

¹⁵⁴ These dialogue “tactics” often include listening and understanding, gentleness, love, grace, friendship, narrative, sharing the gospel, avoiding manipulation and power dynamics, viewing the audience holistically, and building bridges between worldviews. It is an audience-sensitive approach. See examples in Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 155–210.; Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 161–226.; and Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 102–122.

¹⁵⁵ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 162–163.

¹⁵⁶ Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 66.

¹⁵⁷ Penner. Penner, here, references Kierkegaard and his response to Christianity as an objective “something.”

¹⁵⁸ M.G. Piety, “Søren Kierkegaard,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology of Theology*, 505.

¹⁵⁹ Although E/N approaches commonly critique traditional apologetics, there often appears to be misinterpretation or misrepresentation of their views; which is quite ironic, considering that E/N emphasizes knowing their audience yet often misportray them. Regardless, E/N apologists do often identify incongruities in traditional apologists’ thoughts and appropriately critique their emphases and aims. Craig, for example, would resist the claim that reason

hear and embrace the gospel, and to experience Christianity. Proof of God is found within the lived witness and testimony of the church, both individually and communally.¹⁶⁰ The church is a prophetic witness to their neighbor by means of self-giving love.¹⁶¹ Concisely, “the church doesn’t *have* an apologetic; it *is* an apologetic.”¹⁶² “The final test of the Christian scheme,” William Alston suggests, “comes from trying it out in one’s own life, testing the promises the scheme tells us God has made, following the way enjoined on us by the Church and seeing whether it leads to new life in the Spirit.”¹⁶³

Unsurprisingly, these approaches are heavily critiqued by traditional apologists and academics with a more modernist framework of reason. Perhaps this is why E/N proponents are often mislabeled as fideists; it is not that they believe faith and reason are completely separate, but they do certainly view the association through a different framework.¹⁶⁴ This perception led to the neglect of E/N approaches as possible apologetic methodologies by many. Even those who do acknowledge them as distinct or viable methodologies often qualify their terminology: John Warwick Montgomery labels this experiential approach as “non-apologetic apologetics”; James K. A. Smith refers to this method as a type of “*unapologetics*”; Myron Penner, perhaps the most

is the arbiter of truth, when rather, it is the internal testimony and witness of the Holy Spirit. More so, he emphasizes how worldview shapes facts. Penner, a harsh critic of Craig, slightly mischaracterizes his position. Craig would not say the Spirit “needs” arguments and evidences. However, through my own research of Craig’s position, I believe Penner accurately exposes either an inconsistency or unexplored (and thus un-nuanced) position in Craig’s thoughts regarding the role of arguments. For Penner’s critique of Craig, see Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 22–26, esp. 25.

¹⁶⁰ Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 128.

¹⁶¹ Penner, 153.

¹⁶² James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*, The Church and Postmodern Culture (*Grand Rapids: Baker Books*, 2006), 29.

¹⁶³ William Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 304.

¹⁶⁴ M.G. Piety’s in-depth analysis of Kierkegaard’s epistemology explains one such framework, see Piety, “Søren Kierkegaard,” 497–509.

blunt with his aptly titled *The End of Apologetics*, asserts he is “against apologetics.”¹⁶⁵ Penner’s diction clarifies the idea: he wishes to completely redefine the apologetic task; he is against the *traditional* way of doing apologetics.¹⁶⁶ This critique resonates for many today, as this “traditional” way is seen as reductionist and untenable; perhaps especially for pentecostals.¹⁶⁷

Smith reflects on the early pentecostal community at the Azusa Street revival:

“their experience of meeting God in embodied worship led them to resist and reject the rationalism of modernity in favour of an understanding that gave primacy to the affections, to the ‘heart’. In other words, the philosophical anthropology embedded in pentecostal faith and practice does not yield a ‘thinking thing,’ but rather an embodied heart that ‘understands’ the world in ways that are irreducible to the categories and propositions of cognitive ‘reason’... [pentecostal epistemology] does not constitute a rejection of cognition or propositional truth; but it does situate and relativize that particular mode of knowing.”¹⁶⁸

Pentecostal spirituality espouses a pre-theoretical knowledge that affirms the *whole* person and an affective and narrative epistemic practice.¹⁶⁹ Pentecostalism and E/N approaches both emphasize pre-rational knowledge, experience as necessary for truth, “holistic” human beings as narrative and affective creatures, the importance of community for truth, and the Church and

¹⁶⁵ For Montgomery, see Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 28. For Smith, see Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 74. For Penner, see Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 4, 73.

¹⁶⁶ Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 7, 12–14. He defines (traditional) apologetics as attempting to establish rational foundations for Christian belief.

¹⁶⁷ James K. A. Smith, “Pentecostalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology of Theology*, eds. William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 606–618, 606–613. Smith’s use of a lowercase “pentecostal” is intentional and follows Douglas Jacobsen’s nomenclature to appreciate and differentiate the diversity within the tradition. By the term, Smith refers to classical and denominational Pentecostals, Charismatics, “third wavers,” and all Christians who share their set of practices and theological intuitions around the world.

¹⁶⁸ Smith, 606–618, 609.

¹⁶⁹ James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 41–44. Kenneth Archer highlights how the Pentecostal story, or narrative tradition, enables them to not only interpret Scripture, but their experience of reality. This pre-rational narrational knowledge is the “hermeneutical filter for the making of meaning.” See Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2011), 18–42, esp. 18–27.

Christian as witness.¹⁷⁰ Thus, a pentecostal apologetic strategy would likely follow along E/N lines, such as employing invitation and testimony, with the purpose and aim for others to follow Jesus and be transformed by the relationship and story.¹⁷¹ This type of approach precludes the “professionalization” of apologetics: witness is for all, not simply an intellectual or academic elite.¹⁷² Perhaps the similar positions on propositional truths, reason, and witness are what make categorization, then, elusive for both E/N and pentecostalism.

There are both *hard* and *soft* E/N approaches. A *hard* E/N approach focuses solely on experiential and narrational “defenses” of the faith, rejecting logical and historical arguments in the process; whereas a *soft* approach would likely employ those arguments, but still have a penchant for the experiential and narrational as the primary method.¹⁷³ Myron Penner would lean towards a *hard* approach, while N.T. Wright would be an exemplar of the *soft* approach.¹⁷⁴ E/N apologists with a hard approach are usually wrongly critiqued as fideists, and soft E/N apologists typically may appear hard to distinguish or categorize at all — especially from cumulative case apologetics. Interestingly, Alvin Plantinga may be considered a conglomeration of soft

¹⁷⁰ Rickie D. Moore’s four key aspects of a Pentecostal hermeneutic reflect this: (1) the Holy Spirit addresses us in ways that transcend human reason, (2) experience is vital to knowing the truth, (3) the Spirit calls every individual believer to be a witness of the truth, and (4) knowledge of the truth is inseparable from active membership in the localized body of Christ. See Rickie D. Moore, “A Pentecostal Approach to Scripture”, in *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 11–13.

¹⁷¹ Although the field of pentecostal apologetics is largely unexplored or differentiated, and — with minor exceptions — a systematic and thorough treatment has not yet been offered, pentecostals are still defending the faith in an E/N lens; just in a different way than is traditionally conceived.

¹⁷² Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 82. This echoes Kierkegaard’s critique of geniuses, see n145.

¹⁷³ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 162–167.

¹⁷⁴ Although by some definitions Wright is not technically an apologist, he has also been considered one of the greatest apologists of the age. This ambiguity perfectly reflects the tension between E/N and traditional apologetics. For Chatraw and Allen, N.T. Wright’s *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006) is the hallmark of a soft E/N approach. See Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 165–169.

presuppositionalism and a soft E/N approach.¹⁷⁵ Since the dissimilitude between apologetics and evangelism becomes more ambiguous in E/N approaches, some proponents may not even be commonly considered apologists. Yet, they offer a distinct apologetic approach.

An E/N anthropological and scriptural understanding inevitably differs from the prior methods, albeit they share more in common with presuppositionalism. One of the fundamental claims of this approach is that human beings are holistic and multi-dimensional creatures; this is often reflected in their understanding of the *imago Dei* (cf. Gen 1:27).¹⁷⁶ Some E/N see the image of God as a type of narrative or imaginative template that makes sense of the world, since, fundamentally, humans are narrational and thus affective creatures.¹⁷⁷ A reductionist account of humanity to primarily rational beings “obscure[s] our creation of God in our own image.”¹⁷⁸ The New Testament develops the idea of conversion and repentance as *μετάνοια*, i.e. a change of mind (cf. Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3, 24:47); but this is not merely a change of beliefs or intellect — it is a change in affections, desires, and will.¹⁷⁹ The mind is first fundamentally reoriented, and then it

¹⁷⁵ Bielby, “Varieties of Apologetics,” 38.

¹⁷⁶ Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 93–119. Outside of mere rational/structural or functional views of the image of God, E/N apologists naturally lean towards more relational, eschatological/formational, or a conglomeration of views. E/N approaches hold to the diversity of each individual and the notion that humans still reflect the image of God despite the fall, yet is also called to become the image of God in Christ. Wolfgang Vondey develops a Pentecostal perspective of the *imago Dei* with views akin to E/N: a holistic view of the image of God (e.g. relational, intellectual, and so on), that all humans reflect the image of God despite the Fall (although each in a unique way), that the mediation of the image can be marred by sin, and so sanctification helps transform humanity by participation in the *imago Christi* empowered by the Spirit. See Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 175–197, esp. 180–183.

¹⁷⁷ McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 45–48.

¹⁷⁸ Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Reason and Society* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 24; quoted in Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 163.

¹⁷⁹ Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 73.

continually matures and is transformed (cf. Phil. 1:16, 2:1-2, 5; Rom. 12:2).¹⁸⁰ The transformation and reorientation of one's mind should not be taken lightly, as this is a significant demand, and the apologist's approach should honor this.¹⁸¹ Since conversion involves the intellectual, moral, emotional, aesthetic, spiritual, physical, and relational realms, apologetic method should reflect all of these areas. For Paul, salvation "depended on affectively and imaginatively absorbing a story—and seeing [oneself] within that story."¹⁸² Since the Spirit alone converts (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Jn. 3:3-5), the role of humanity is simply to bear witness through their living and proclamation of the gospel, and to aid others in moving toward full conversion and maturity (which, of course, will not be complete until the eschaton).¹⁸³ Persuasion, reason, and witness, in this way, can rightly work together and not be harmful, but require a community of like-minded individuals.¹⁸⁴ This approach also must be done in a person- or audience-sensitive way.¹⁸⁵ "I have become all things to all people," Paul testifies, "so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22 NIV).

A few assumptions differentiate E/N approaches. First, the primary goal of apologetics is to demonstrate that one should *commit their life to Jesus*.¹⁸⁶ Whether or not this is towards an initial

¹⁸⁰ Stackhouse Jr, 74.

¹⁸¹ William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 149; quoted in Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 161.

¹⁸² Smith, "Pentecostalism," 606–618, 615.

¹⁸³ Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 83.

¹⁸⁴ Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, 164–165.

¹⁸⁵ Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 144–145.

¹⁸⁶ Bielby, "Varieties of Apologetics," 30–32.

conversion or a maturation, this is the preeminent aim for E/N approaches.¹⁸⁷ Second, this approach sees humans as primarily *desiring* or *loving* beings. Like presuppositionalism, E/N emphasizes a person's pre-rational presumptions that shape their world and interpretation. However, E/N pushes this notion further, as beliefs and presuppositions are founded on what one desires or loves.¹⁸⁸ This amounts to an embodied, affective, and narrative anthropology. This is why the goal is conversion. Truth must be embodied and to change one's mind requires a reorientation of desire, love, will, and affections. These factors determine beliefs and affects reason.

Summary & Conclusion

This chapter began with an exploration of various taxonomies for apologetic methodologies. The methods were then further organized, as appropriate, into categories that shared the same general approach. From this list, three were selected for further analysis based mainly on recognition and utility in contemporary settings: presuppositionalism, traditional apologetics, and experiential/narrative apologetics. Each view provided a unique perspective on apologetic approach and methodology. Presuppositionalism argues that the Christian God is a necessary presupposition — the only way to make sense of the world. Traditional apologetics utilizes arguments and evidences towards a rational case for the Christian God. Experiential/Narrative apologetics emphasizes that truth is embodied and lived, and thus, their approach reflects witness and a focus on experience and narrativity.

¹⁸⁷ Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 67. Also, McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 18. Also, Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics*, 122–123.

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 46–47.

Each approach's view of humanity directly correlates to their method and aim of apologetics. The anthropological model and chief task of apologetics separate these three categories. Traditional apologetics, with more optimism towards the reliability of reason, strategically focuses on humans as *rational* beings. Their primary aim is to defend Christianity's *rationality*. Presuppositionalism, highlighting the pre-rational beliefs of humans, views humans as *believing* beings. Their primary aim is to show that *Christian belief is true* since it needs to be presupposed for truth. Experiential/Narrative apologetics, which promotes a holistic picture of humanity and truth as necessarily embodied, regards humans as *desiring* beings. Thus, their aim is conversion — an invitation to follow Christ and live the truth. Although any generalizations of apologetic approaches risk misunderstandings, the specific methods articulated in this chapter reflect these anthropological models and goals *primarily in practice*. Certainly, traditional apologists would like to show Christianity as true and for people to come to Christ. However, their chief aim represented through their method reflects the goal of the rationality of Christianity. Similarly, they may even personally view humans as more than simply rational beings — yet their method(s) do not primarily reflect this. The next chapter will attempt to develop an interdisciplinary “portrait” of a human to compare with the three models assumed by these methods, and thus explore any implications from the research for apologetic method.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HUMAN PERSON: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PORTRAIT

Introduction

“What are human beings that you care for them,” David asks the Lord, “mere mortals that you think of them” (Ps. 144:3 NIV)? Despite the thousands of years difference, this question is still presently asked in a variety of ways. Many of the prevailing theological issues today are anthropological, whether racism, evolution, ableism, gender — or apologetics. An inaccurate perception of humanity may breed disaster. Improper anthropological perceptions have led to oppression, exclusion, violence, value hierarchies, and countless other sins. A well-informed anthropology produces and benefits an apologetic method, whereas a misinformed or reductive anthropology negatively affects the health and effectiveness of apologetics.

This chapter aims to provide an anthropology informed by theology, the social sciences, and neuroscience. specifically focusing on human origin, the human condition (and solution), the mission and purpose of humanity, ontology and epistemology, and the end or destiny of humanity for apologetic purposes.¹ Therefore, many anthropological issues, such as human freedom, racism, ableism, evolution, gender, and sexuality will not be directly engaged — even if there may be indirect inferences.² At the end of the chapter, the resulting implications for apologetics will be outlined and contrasted to James K.A. Smith’s three anthropological models.

¹ Although Christian anthropology is grounded in and filtered through Scripture and theology, the sciences can supplant and nuance this information, as will be seen later in the chapter. These fields offer unique perspectives that are often considered in discussions of anthropological issues.

² For a closer look at some of these issues, see Hans Schwarz, *The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013); or Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity* (Downers

Theological Anthropology

The challenge of constructing a theological anthropology is multifold. First, the task is inevitably complex, since it interacts with soteriology, Christology, eschatology, hamartiology, epistemology, and many other theological fields of study. Second, much of the task is already shaped by the priority given to different anthropological questions and the assumptions usually imported into the biblical text.³ For example, the ambiguity of the *imago Dei* in Genesis is attributed a variety of qualities, such as reason, usually reflecting one's own anthropological assumptions.⁴ Third, which sources are given precedence is up for debate, usually through the primeval history of Genesis, Pauline literature, and the person of Christ.⁵ Thus, the following sections will attempt a tripartite approach to theological anthropology, consisting of the early Genesis narratives, Christology, and Pauline literature for a more holistic and balanced account. This anthropological study will focus on human origin, the human condition (and solution), the mission and purpose of humanity, ontology and epistemology, and the end or destiny of humanity — all relating to Smith's three anthropological models and any implications for apologetics. The story begins in Genesis.

Grover: Intervarsity Press, 1997); or Susan A. Ross, *Anthropology: Seeking Light and Beauty* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012).

³ Ian A. McFarland, *Difference & Identity: A Theological Anthropology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 2.

⁴ John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 146–175, esp. 146–153.

⁵ See for example Ross, *Anthropology*, 17–26.

I. The Image of God: Eden & Afterward

The two creation narratives in Genesis ground a theological anthropology, answering questions of human origin, condition, purpose, and destiny.⁶ The first humans are created by God in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26–27). At the risk of stating the obvious, humans are created as *contingent, diverse, and transient* beings.⁷ The Creator has formed his creation *ex nihilo*, i.e. out of nothing, and creation is utterly dependent, or contingent, upon God (cf. Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11). Humans are finite, with a beginning and (earthly) end in a particular place and time (cf. Acts 17:26). Knowledge and human judgments, then, are necessarily contingent on personal circumstances.⁸ Diversity pervades the creation, and not only in biological sex. Each human is made in the image of God, but this image is recognized and embodied in different ways (cf. Gen. 1:26–27).⁹ These characteristics are not defects since humans are created *good* (Gen 1:31).¹⁰ Over the centuries, various understandings have been attributed to the image of God that humans bear, usually controversially argued in one of three ways: (1) as a *quality*, e.g. reason, love, or language; (2) as a *duty*, e.g. propagation and dominion, or (3) as a *relationship*.¹¹ Regardless, the

⁶ Several scholars note two separate creation stories in Genesis: 1:1–2:4 and 2:4–2:25. Which story includes 2:4 is a matter of controversy. They provide different diction, style/genre, and accounts of the order of creation. Although this may seem problematic in “literal” readings of the text, the narratives provide theological truths regardless. See Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 93–95.

⁷ Ian A. McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 43–67.

⁸ McFarland, 65.

⁹ McFarland, 54.

¹⁰ McFarland, 66.

¹¹ Bernd Oberdorfer, “The Dignity of Human Personhood and the Concept of the ‘Image of God’” in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 265–270. As Oberdorfer describes, all these views can be heavily critiqued — and for good reason. The biblical text is also rather ambiguous to an exact meaning. That is why many instead make the starting

Hebrew word for “image” has a standard ancient Near Eastern meaning akin to “idol” which entailed earthly representation of deities; in other words, humans are supposed to be representatives of God on earth — whether that’s through qualities, duties, relationships, or something different altogether.¹² At the very least, the image of God is about connection to God and a reflection of him.¹³

Humans are also created as necessarily embodied (Gen. 2:4–7). God “breathed life into human bodies, bodies created by God, indicating God’s view of the body... it is good because God formed it with God’s own hands” (cf. Gen. 2:7).¹⁴ Furthermore, both creation narratives point to the relationality of humanity (cf. Gen 2:18–25). The first creation narrative portrays both male and female as being created together (cf. Gen 1:27). In the second creation narrative, when man is first created without woman, his life is neither good nor complete (cf. Gen 2:18) — not until another is also created.¹⁵ Humans are made for fellowship. No human exists in isolation, divorced from God, creation, or each other.¹⁶

The narrative then takes a tragic turn: Adam and Eve eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and disobey God (cf. Gen. 3:6). The serpent tempted Eve with a new vision: she will not die, will be like God, and will know good and evil (cf. Gen. 3:4–5). Their sin is usually perceived as human pride and a desire for self-sufficiency or autonomy — a desire to be like

place the New Testament use of the image of God, which provides a Christological, eschatological, and formational focus. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

¹² Richter, *The Epic of Eden*, 107–108.

¹³ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 175–177.

¹⁴ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis, Belief* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 44.

¹⁵ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), 62.

¹⁶ Torre, *Genesis*, 24.

God.¹⁷ However, if Eve did not know of good and evil when she sinned, the implication is that sin began as (and may still be) a misguided good or desire.¹⁸ Eve, for example, saw the serpent's vision (i.e. the fruit of the tree) — the misguided good — and found it “desirable” (Gen 3:6). The tension between the desire to be loved and the desire to be self-sufficient is a common theme in the biblical narratives.¹⁹ Although their sin prompts shame and hiding from God (cf. Gen 2:25; 3:8), God calls out (cf. Gen 3:9) and covers them with a sacrifice (cf. 3:21).²⁰ Their sin results not only in a reversal of blessings, but also in the relational effects of the Fall — to God, creation, and others. They feel shame with each other and God, and the ground and creation becomes cursed (cf. Gen 3:14–19). This is the first of many rebellions or “falls” — for after Genesis 3 no human avoids sin; it is a continuing pattern throughout history.²¹

The creation narratives propose an answer to the question “why do I exist?” Humans were created “to live in and attend to paradise” (Gen. 1:28–30; 2:8–17); this arguably includes many types of labor and creative work today.²² God planned “a perfect world in which [humans] would live eternally, stretching their cognitive and creative skills to the uttermost, building their

¹⁷ Torre, 75–76.

¹⁸ William McDavid, *Eden and Afterward: A Mockingbird Guide to Genesis* (Charlottesville: Mockingbird Ministries, 2014), 17. This idea can also be traced as far back as Augustine, as McDavid notes.

¹⁹ McDavid, 19.

²⁰ Torre, *Genesis*, 78. When covering their shame with the skin of an animal, he foreshadows the future redemption to come. God stated eating of the tree would lead to death (2:17) — yet they lived a long time after. This could allude to a spiritual death, then, or perhaps they were somehow saved from death by God.

²¹ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 66–67. John Steinbeck, in his novel *East of Eden*, beautifully portrays the pervasiveness of sin. He traces through multiple generations of characters reflecting the Cain and Abel narrative, falling into evil as if it is destiny. At the end of the novel, Cal (a type of Cain) is freed by the Hebrew word *timshel* [sic], translated “thou mayest,” which allows him to overcome his family legacy of sin through seeing it as a choice and not a destiny. See John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*, Centennial Edition (London: Penguin Books, 2002). For the four rebellions in Genesis 1–11, see Torre, *Genesis*, 64–138.

²² Torre, *Genesis*, 47–48.

civilization within the protective boundaries of their relationship with him.”²³ Although sin and misguided desire supposedly mess up God’s original intent for humanity, redemption history reveals God’s “final” plan is leading humans to New Jerusalem — it is God’s original plan all along (cf. Rev. 21–22).²⁴ God is “making all things new” (cf. Rev. 21:5) — a (re)creation not *ex nihilo*, but *ex materia*. The rest of Scripture addresses the sin problem.²⁵ As Sandra Richter illuminates, “God has been leading humanity back to Eden by means of a sequence of steps, a series of rescues, a series of covenants.”²⁶ This is the grand story of God and humanity. How will humanity return to Eden? How will sin be dealt with? How can humanity once more reside in God’s presence? Through Jesus Christ alone.

II. The Perfect Image of God: Christ(ology)

Christology often clarifies other areas of theology, and perhaps anthropology especially. Jesus Christ is the true man (cf. Jn. 19–20), the second Adam (cf. 1 Cor. 15), the perfect image of God (cf. 2. Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), and the quintessential exemplar for humanity (cf. Heb. 1–2).²⁷ All other humans reflect the image of God to the degree of their likeness to Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49).²⁸ Christ is not just any model of faith (cf. Heb. 11); he reveals what it means to be

²³ Richter, *The Epic of Eden*, 118.

²⁴ Richter, 129–134.

²⁵ House, *Old Testament Theology*, 67.

²⁶ Richter, *The Epic of Eden*, 130.

²⁷ Marc Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 169. Also see Nonna Verna Harrison, *God’s Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 30–37.

²⁸ Marc Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 21.

truly human; he is not only *fully* human, but *perfectly* human (cf. Heb. 5:5–10).²⁹ If this is true, then embodiment and relationality should be affirmed as essential to humanity.³⁰ This may be particularly evident in the synoptic gospel’s holistic soteriology — a transformation of the totality of a person.³¹ Consistently, healing is not merely spiritual or even mental, but also physical and relational (cf. Matt. 8:1–4, 9:2–13, 27–31; Lk. 8:42–48). Jesus heals the body, but also restores people to their family and community since they would often be considered unclean, and further reveals the universality of salvation (cf. Mark 5:21–43).³² More so, Jesus’ resurrection reveals an embodied Jesus (cf. Lk. 21; Ac. 2:25–31, 10:40–42) and the description of New Jerusalem is one embodied on earth (cf. Rev. 21–22). However, a theological anthropology is not complete without acknowledging the Spirit who empowers him, the Father who sends him, and his relation within the Trinity.³³

The hypostatic union, i.e. Christ’s dual human and divine natures, explains the relation and distinction between God and humanity. Maximus the Confessor, a seventh-century theologian, engages the language of *Logos* and *logoi* to discuss this correlation. Ian McFarland recapitulates his idea:

²⁹ Brian L. McCormack, “‘With Loud Cries and Tears’: The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle to the Hebrews” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, eds. Richard Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 37–68, esp. 62–67. Also see Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 171–172.

³⁰ Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 194.

³¹ Joel B. Green, “Restoring the Human Person: New Testament Voices for a Wholistic and Social Anthropology” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, eds. Robert John Russell et al. (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 2002), 3–22.

³² William C. Placher, *Mark, Belief* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 82–88.

³³ Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 186–187. Also see John Zizioulas for his trinitarian anthropology in Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective*, 163–189. For a further discussion of the anthropological implications of pneumatology, see Lisa P. Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

“God, the Logos, seeks to share the divine goodness with that which is not God, and so doing refracts the richness of the divine life through myriad nondivine forms, the *logoi* of individual creatures, each of which displays some aspect of the undivided fullness of humanity... *Logos* has a broad array of meanings. It can be translated ‘word,’ ‘speech,’ and ‘reason’... however, I suggest that ‘*story*’ is a particularly appropriate rendering.”³⁴

The Creator (*Logos*) becomes creation (a *logos* among *logoi*) so that God may be known.³⁵

Certainly, Jesus is different than other humans. Not only was he born a particular human with an ethnicity, gender, culture, etc., but he was also sinless and God.³⁶ Jesus is not different through the *lack* of a human nature (*logos*), but rather through the *way* his humanity is realized (*tropos*).³⁷ In Jesus’ humanity, he lived dependent upon the Father as Son, hence the *logos* of humanity remains.³⁸ Jesus is fully human. Yet, his humanity is lived “filially” — in a way concordant with the Word’s way of being God.³⁹ This explains how Jesus can be fully divine and fully human: he shares every condition of humanness, yet lives in a way consistent to the Logos’ manner of existence, thus he transcends “normal” humanness through genuinely finite action. Jesus’ story perfectly reflects the eternal mutual love represented in the Trinity; similarly, each human’s own story attests to and is subsumed and sustained by the Logos — *the Story*.⁴⁰

³⁴ McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh*, 65.

³⁵ McFarland, 66–67.

³⁶ Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 183–184.

³⁷ Rowan Williams, *Christ: The Heart of Creation* (Bedford Square, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 101–102.

³⁸ Williams, 101.

³⁹ To clarify, Williams states: “this human nature is identified ultimately and decisively by the fact that it actualizes divine filiation. Its mode or manner of subsisting is to be ‘filial’ as the Word is ‘filial’, to be absolutely, uninterruptedly, consciously and thankfully dependent upon the self-gift of the Father in such a way that the fullness of that giving life is lived in the one who receives it.” Williams, 102–103.

⁴⁰ McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh*, 65–66.

The hypostatic union reveals at least two major anthropological implications. First, the *telos*, or ultimate end, of humanity is to “be aligned with its own natural *logos* but also for it to exist in optimal relation with *the Logos*”; this is what it means to be fully human.⁴¹ In other words, the ultimate goal of humanity is to actualize the Word’s loving dependence on the Father in one’s own finite life. This is exactly what separates Jesus from the rest of humanity — Jesus fulfills this end through the *tropos* of filial relation, i.e. utter dependence and love for the Father.⁴² Since each *logos* expresses and reflects God uniquely in a finite form, the diversity of the *logoi* more fully reflect the eternal *Logos* — at least to the degree that they act as they should.⁴³ Second, human self-emptying (*kenosis*) and self-transcending (*ekstasis*) can only be realized because of one’s alignment with Jesus’ humanity as his sacramental Body.⁴⁴ The Incarnation made this end, i.e. transformation via *kenosis* and *ekstasis*, possible through unification with the incarnate Logos. Rowan Williams further describes Maximus’ *ekstasis* as the proper *telos* of humanity:

“it is the condition in which the knowing finite subject goes beyond its given limits, including the ‘natural’ limits of self-preservation: it is generated by *erōs*, [i.e.] the magnetic drawing of finite beings towards the infinite. For Christ to live in the believer is for the believer to be caught up into the self-abandoning love both of the Son for the Father and of God for Creation... What God brings about in the finite is a movement of ‘desire’, *erōs* — that is, a moving beyond what the intellect can master and a growth in love. But this growth in love manifests itself also as an overcoming of ‘the divisions now prevailing in nature because of man’s self-love: the community of finite agents becomes more and more solidly established in ‘justice’ as human beings recognize more fully in one another their common nature as rational. Paradoxically, universal rationality here means the universal realization of ‘ecstasy’ acting in other-directed love for all in their diverse conditions, so that believers ‘[belong] not to themselves but to those whom they love.’”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Williams, *Christ*, 104. See also McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh*, 204–206.

⁴² Williams, 104.

⁴³ Williams.

⁴⁴ Williams, 106–107.

⁴⁵ Williams, 107–108.

This divine way of living is the *telos* of humanity. As human desire for the infinite grows, the more he/she will reflect divine filiation through *kenosis* and *ekstasis*. Augustine similarly espouses that human willing follows desire.⁴⁶ Hence, humans sin because of their inadequate recognition of God's perfect goodness and beauty; they cannot *not* sin unless their desires are oriented to the good.⁴⁷ Jesus, of course, perfectly sees and desires God's goodness and beauty, so he is without sin — and it is because of him through the Spirit that humans can achieve this.⁴⁸ This is the *telos* that humanity anticipates, and which explains the lack of sin in glory. Jesus alone has reached this *telos*; humanity's reflection of God is commensurate to the degree their desire is properly oriented. In the culmination of this desire, the image of God within a person is fully realized and one's life reflects the divine community.⁴⁹ The divine became fully human, so humans, too, can become fully human. Although Jesus' physical body is no longer here, the Body of Christ — the Church — mediates his presence here on earth.⁵⁰ That God became fully human, suffered and died on the cross, resurrected, and brings salvation is the heart of the gospel — a message that Paul calls all people to participate in.

⁴⁶ McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh*, 134.

⁴⁷ McFarland.

⁴⁸ McFarland, 134, 204–211.

⁴⁹ Williams, *Christ*, 108.

⁵⁰ McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh*, 197–198. For further reflections and nuances on the Church as Christ's body, see McFarland, 194–200.

III. The Present Image(s) of God: Paul & Participation

Paul's writings further illuminate the anthropological condition, mission, and destiny — specifically through his soteriology. All of humanity has “fallen short of the glory of God” and thus are “under the power of sin,” “ungodly and unrighteous,” and have “darkened minds” (cf. Rom. 1:18–3:23); humans do not live how they are intended to, and thus their destiny, or *telos*, is also not what is intended. Sinful humanity needs a radical reorientation — nothing less than salvation.⁵¹ For Paul, Jesus Christ provided a way of salvation for all people through his death and resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:16) God's mission on earth is to bring salvation to the world — the whole cosmos, even (cf. Rom. 1:16; 8:18–25).⁵² However, this salvation is not received through beliefs in a set of propositions or any type of intellectual assent; rather, for Paul it is through full participation in the gospel, “a comprehensive transformation of conviction, character, and communal affiliation” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14–17).⁵³ Michael Gorman emphasizes that participating in Christ “is both to benefit from God's mission of liberation and reconciliation and to bear witness to this divine mission — thus furthering it — by becoming a faithful embodiment of it.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 274–277.

⁵² Gorman, 12.

⁵³ Gorman, 23–24. For another scholar who largely agrees with Gorman's interpretation of Paul, see Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017), 109–185.

⁵⁴ Gorman, 36. Gorman derives this idea through an extensive analysis of Pauline theology and diction. Seven features lead to his summary: (1) language of baptism, (2) parallel language about faith and justification, (3) language of being ‘in Christ’ and Christ being within, (4) language of being clothed with Christ, (5) the language of sharing, *koinōnia*, (6) the language of transformation for those in Christ, and (7) the language of sharing in various aspects of Christ's story that are expressed in the Greek prefix *syn-* (English ‘co-’). For a further examination of these qualities, see 26–49.

Paul calls people to *become* the gospel; being, doing, and telling the gospel.⁵⁵ This participation is a present condition, a mission, and a future end for humanity in Christ. The Church through the Spirit, both individually and communally, presently participate in the divine as they reflect the image of God on earth. Paul presents several examples of how this present holiness occurs: through embodying faith, hope, and love (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8, 23); through peacemaking and reconciliation (cf. Eph. 4:3); through hope and patience in suffering (cf. Rom. 12:2); and through humility and gentleness (cf. Eph. 4:2; Rom. 12:16; Phil. 2:2–4). Succinctly, believers “wear” Jesus (cf. Rom. 13:14; Eph. 6:10–22) and re-narrate his story through word and deed.⁵⁶ As they participate in the *missio Dei* and embody the *imago Dei*, viz. as they become more Christ-like, they reverse the consequences of the first man, Adam (cf. Rom. 1–2).

This participation and transformation is not just temporal and ethical, it is eschatological and ontological.⁵⁷ The ultimate *telos* of humanity is the “freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21) and conformity to the Son (Rom. 8:29).⁵⁸ All of this is solely possible because of Christ through the Spirit who empowers believers to participate in and embody the gospel, thus being a witness to the world (cf. 8:9–17).⁵⁹ Although a shallow reading of Paul may see the body as evil or unnecessary, Paul’s anthropology is more complex and counters both these

⁵⁵ Gorman, 44.

⁵⁶ Gorman, 72, 116, 289–290. The narrative or story is one not only to be announced and proclaimed, but lived and performed — embodied. Gorman sees the “master story” as represented in Phil. 2:6–11, see 106–141.

⁵⁷ Gorman, 282.

⁵⁸ Gorman, 281.

⁵⁹ Gorman, 282–283.

reductionistic notions; embodiment is good when one's desires are rightly oriented, since "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24).⁶⁰

This spirit-empowered witness through word and deed, or gospel embodiment, is a defense (*apologia*) and confirmation of the faith (cf. Phil. 1:7).⁶¹ This *apologia* is often a response to the suffering and persecution believers experience.⁶² Yet defense is not only reactionary but proactive, involving peacemaking and loving one's enemies (cf. Rom. 12:17–21).⁶³ A similar exhortation occurs in 1 Peter 3:13–17 (ESV),

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense (*apologia*) to anyone who asks you for a reason (*logos*) for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”⁶⁴

Although 1 Peter 3:15 is engaged in most apologetical works, it is often divorced from its wider context.⁶⁵ The purpose of 1 Peter is holiness in three forms: (1) personal holiness, (2) social holiness, and (3) communal holiness.⁶⁶ In this passage, the author focuses on doing good amidst

⁶⁰ Understanding the difference between *sarx* and *soma* are essential to Paul's view. See Michael Welker, "Flesh-Body-Heart-Soul-Spirit: Paul's Anthropology as an Interdisciplinary Bridge-Theory" in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 45–57, esp. 47–49. Also see Gerd Theissen, "*Sarx, Soma, and the Transformative Pneuma*" in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 166–185.

⁶¹ Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 139.

⁶² Gorman, 111.

⁶³ Gorman, 165.

⁶⁴ Greek added.

⁶⁵ For two examples of this, see: Louis Markos, *Apologetics in the 21st Century* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 17–18 and Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics*, 118–122.

⁶⁶ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 17.

the evil, suffering, and oppression, emphasizing *how* believers respond to their persecutors, with the implication that their good behavior and obedience (or submission) will make the persecutors question and ask about the hope they have.⁶⁷ The defense is much more about *orthopraxy*, or right action, than presenting a rational case against other belief systems, even if “reason” implies a verbal defense as well.⁶⁸ So for these authors, apologetics, the task of defending the faith, is to bear witness to the gospel in word and deed. Of course, this witness may include rational arguments or evidences, but it is not *essentially* that.

If the defense of the faith is witness in word and deed, then it ineluctably overlaps with evangelism.⁶⁹ Apologetics is inevitably evangelism in the sense that believers’ lives bear witness in both word and deed. Defending the faith is a product of becoming the gospel; as they live correctly, they bear witness and defend the faith. The only way a “defense” is not witness, is when it does not participate in or reflect God — and if that’s the case — believers should not engage in it. This obviously (re)defines the relationship between apologetics and evangelism in a way discordant with some popular beliefs. This is especially true if evangelism is limited by definition to the verbal proclamation of Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.⁷⁰ The most common view, especially popular among traditional apologists, is that apologetics is a type of “pre-evangelism” or reasoned argumentation separate from proclaiming the gospel.⁷¹ The

⁶⁷ Lewis Donelson, *From Hebrews to Revelation: A Theological Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 62–63.

⁶⁸ James W. Sire, *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 16–17.

⁶⁹ Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 44, 75.

⁷⁰ Of course, with this narrow definition of evangelism, apologetics would not overlap entirely. See, for example, Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics*, iii.

⁷¹ For an example of the common view of the relation between evangelism and apologetics, see Hunter, *Evangelistic Apologetics*, 100–101.

rational arguments and evidences are meant to open up a person to hearing the gospel message, clearing away intellectual “debris” of sorts. In this system, “evangelism sticks more to the emotional than to the rational.”⁷² Yet this posits a reductionist framework of not only salvation, but the gospel itself — at least according to Gorman’s understanding of Paul. Salvation is conveyed (and embodied and practiced) through word and deed. Paul challenges the former notion and (re)defines the idea of apologetics, although this does not necessarily reject the idea of reasoned arguments and evidences within that framework. This revised view is consistent with the E/N methodology and their primary aim in apologetics.

The *way* defenses are made matter for Paul. For example, Paul compares holiness amidst the culture to waging war in 2 Corinthians 10:4–6 (ESV),

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments (*logismos*) and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought (*noēma*) captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every obedience, when your obedience is complete.”

The Roman military imagery contrasts the weapons of Christ against the weapons of the culture, including “violent force, sophisticated philosophical logic that wins debates, [and] even displays of ecstatic experiences designed to dazzle.”⁷³ Rather, the Church’s loving witness takes every mind (*noēma*) captive through the transformation of enemies into the children of God, thus saved from their hardened and blinded *noēma* (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4).⁷⁴ Furthermore, Paul creatively shapes his witness and testimony around his audience. For example, his verbal witness to the

⁷² Markos, *Apologetics in the 21st Century*, 20.

⁷³ Mitzi L. Minor, *2 Corinthians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (*Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2009*), 192–193. The Greek *logizmos* generally referred to philosophical thoughts and reasoning.

⁷⁴ Minor, 194–197. The Greek *noēma* translates as “thought,” “design,” or “mind.” Since it evokes imagery from earlier in the letter and Minor prioritizes it, “mind” will be the preferred translation here.

Jews (cf. Acts 2), Greeks (cf. Acts 17), and Romans (cf. Acts 24–26) all uniquely are formed around each audience.⁷⁵ This echoes of Paul’s proclamation, “Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some” (1 Cor. 9:22 NLT). Witness, in word *and* deed, should be creative.

The Sciences

In recent history, multiple disciplines confirm — or at least reveal intimations of — persons as *desirers* or *lovers*, including neuroscience, psychology, sociology, and behavioral economics. This is mainly revealed by the research in two ways: (1) a rejection of the person-as-thinker model, and (2) evidence of persons as more holistic than the other models assert. So, while this may not necessarily confirm the entire person-as-desirer model, the research corroborates their central claims. Humans are affective, intuitive, narrative, relational, and embodied — these are central and essential characteristics to what it means to be human. Humans are also certainly thinking beings, but only among other attributes, and it is not as central as some would maintain. As the research will show, a person’s “reasoning” is often simply a post-hoc justification of something more subconscious. A human person is much more complex and holistic than many models consider.

⁷⁵ For how Paul specifically shaped his method to audience in each of these cases, see Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 59–67.

I. The Social Sciences

Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist, rejects a Platonic anthropology where reason is not only central to the human being, but the master of passions or desires. Rather, he insists that reason is (mostly) servant to the passions.⁷⁶ He employs the metaphor of a rider and an elephant to highlight the difference between two types of cognition: reasoning (controlled processes) and intuition (automatic processes, including emotion).⁷⁷ The rider, i.e. reasoning, sees into the future to make better decisions, learns new skills, and is a spokesperson for the elephant.⁷⁸ However, the elephant does whatever it pleases — the rider does not guide it — the rider mainly creates post hoc justifications or explanations for the elephant’s movements. In other words, intuitions deeply guide humans, and most reasoning is simply an after-the-fact justification for what is already intuitively known or felt.⁷⁹ A person’s judgments and reasoning can often persuade others’ intuition, especially in the context of a friendly relationship or affective narrative, since social influence substantially affects humans.⁸⁰ Of course, one’s own intuitions or judgments may be changed via the rider through private reflection and reasoned judgment, but this is rarely the case.⁸¹ Haidt lists six key research findings that together reinforce this metaphor: (1) affective primacy, viz. intuition/emotion are processed fast and are more powerful than thinking; (2) social and political judgments depend heavily on fast intuitive “flashes”; (3) moral judgments are

⁷⁶ Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 32–36, 79.

⁷⁷ Haidt, 53.

⁷⁸ Haidt, 54.

⁷⁹ Haidt.

⁸⁰ Haidt, 55–57, 79–91.

⁸¹ Haidt, 55–56.

affected by taste, smell, and other bodily states; (4) psychopaths reason but lack many emotions, and their moral judgments are deficient; (5) conversely, babies feel but lack reasoning, yet have the beginnings of moral judgments; and (6) moral judgments are correlated to affective reactions in the brain.⁸² Together these findings reveal that most (moral) judgments are the result of intuition and emotion, rather than reasoning.

The field of Behavioral Economics similarly contests humans as merely “rational” beings. Traditional economic theory assumes humans always optimize, i.e. make the most rational (or internally consistent) decision, and reason without bias.⁸³ This fictitious optimizing creature is referred to as an “Econ.” However, unlike Econs, humans are often found misbehaving: decisions are oftentimes too difficult to solve, beliefs are biased, and supposedly irrelevant factors greatly influence decisions and beliefs.⁸⁴ Real humans rarely believe or choose rationally, but they are not *irrational* either — a rational-agent model of humanity is simply not compatible with the current research.⁸⁵ Thus, the field of Behavioral Economics emerged — shifting the

⁸² If you would like to personally test (2), take the IAT at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>. Another example of (2) is that the outcomes of every presidential election are concordant with research that asked people to make a competence judgment between the candidates with only *a tenth of a second* viewing of their faces. For an example of (3), various research showed that judgments were heavily influenced by good or bad smells (the latter resulting in harsher judgments) and standing far away from or near a hand sanitizer dispenser (the latter resulting in more conservative judgments). For the research and a further explanation of each facet of research, see Haidt, 64–82.

⁸³ Richard H. Thaler, *Misbehaving: The Making of Behavioral Economics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 4–5. Although even Adam Smith, the “father of modern economic thinking,” disagreed with this view of humanity. He even wrote much on human “passions.” See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*; and Thaler, 7.

⁸⁴ Thaler, 6–9.

⁸⁵ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), 411. Amos Tversky and Kahneman, often seen as the founders of behavioral economics, are often repulsed when their work is used to “prove” that people are irrational. People are neither rational nor irrational, at least in economist definitions. Human cognitive faculties do not allow for pure rationality — it is impossible. Humans can still make reasoned and rational decisions, although people usually need help making correct judgments and decisions. For a history of Tversky and Kahneman, see Michael Lewis, *The Undoing Project: A Friendship That Changed Our Minds* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017).

object of economic theory from Econs to real people who err, in order to improve accuracy of predictions. Humans are biased or misbehave in several ways: *loss aversion*, a bias towards avoiding losses rather than making profits; *framing*, a bias from how information is presented; *anchoring*, a bias towards recently encountered information; *confirmation bias*, seeking evidence for pre-existing beliefs; the *halo effect*, when feelings towards unrelated data impacts belief or judgment; *hindsight bias*, a post-hoc belief that an outcome was predicted or considered very likely; and *the endowment effect*, where a possessed item is valued more than the same non-possessed object.⁸⁶ Daniel Kahneman describes two cognitive “systems.” System 1 is automatic and creates quick judgments involving intuitions, impressions, and emotions; while it is the origin of many biases and wrongful judgments, most of the time System 1 is correct.⁸⁷ System 2 is slow, deliberate, and detailed — often “associated with the subjective experiences of agency, choice, and concentration.”⁸⁸ Although System 2 often improves performance and takes over when System 1 is in trouble, it usually rationalizes and forms beliefs from the decisions in System 1 and is also prone to error due to its own limits.⁸⁹ Thus, in order to persuade a person, an appeal to System 1 is usually most effective.⁹⁰ Kahneman’s dual-system thinking shares much

⁸⁶ Kahneman, 79–88, 202–204, 278–299, 363–374. Both Thaler and Kahneman’s works engage the research of these effects, among many more, such as availability, representativeness, and the narrative fallacy. For more, also see Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008); or Ori Brafman and Rom Brafman, *Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior* (New York: The Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008).

⁸⁷ Kahneman, 20–30, 415–416.

⁸⁸ Kahneman, 21.

⁸⁹ Kahneman, 21–30, 415.

⁹⁰ Kahneman, 62–64, 80–81.

commonality with Jonathan Haidt’s metaphor of the elephant and the rider, with similar conclusions.⁹¹

But are important decisions, like religious belief, really prone to post hoc rationalizations? On top of the prior research, a brief examination of atheists (and nonbelievers in general) may point to a similar conclusion. Psychologist Paul Vitz found that a majority of history’s most famous and outspoken atheists had absent or dysfunctional fathers between the ages of three and five, e.g. Nietzsche, Hume, Russell, Sartre, Camus, Freud, and Wells.⁹² (Interestingly, Derek was two years old when our father left.) Conversely, the opposite was true with famous theists. Although he rejects this correlation will be true in all cases, as he gives examples of, he reveals a trend. He concludes that many atheists likely reject God for subconscious reasons, and not from reason or evidence primarily.⁹³ Demographic research conducted by the Barna Group interestingly supplants Vitz’ familial theme: the outreach effort most likely to appeal to Skeptics (i.e. self-proclaimed atheists and agnostics) is learning “that the church has older adults who provide life lessons and advice to younger adults”; whereas this ranked much lower for the non-Skeptic nonbeliever.⁹⁴ While any direct causation is contestable, the correlation at least points to the likelihood of pre-rational factors of disbelief in some cases. Other research from the Barna Group studied non-Christians’ negative perceptions of the faith. Most negative perceptions result

⁹¹ Both Haidt and Kahneman note the similarity of the two. For Kahneman’s connection, see Kahneman, 140. For Haidt’s connection, see Jonathan Haidt, “Reasons Matter (When Intuitions Don’t Object)”, last modified October 7, 2012. <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/07/reasons-matter-when-intuitions-dont-object/>.

⁹² Paul C. Vitz, *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), part one. To Vitz, three years old is when a child becomes less dependent on the mother, whereas five is when social relationships soften the blow.

⁹³ Vitz, part two.

⁹⁴ Barna Group, *Churchless: Understanding Today’s Unchurched and How to Connect with Them*, eds. George Barna and David Kinnaman (Carol Stream: Tyndale Momentum, 2016), 148–150. The results were self-reported from the Skeptics.

from personal relationships and church experiences, and at least one-fifth of non-Christians — and one-third for 16–29-year-olds — note negative experiences with a church or Christian that affected their view of Jesus negatively.⁹⁵ As Kinnaman soberly states, “what people think about Christians reflects personal stories.”⁹⁶ These experiences lead many away not only from other Christians, but from the faith. A rejection of Christianity, then, is usually more than simply a denial by reason alone, if at all, and may likely be a post hoc judgment based on pre-rational factors. Thomas Nagel, another well-known atheist, succinctly articulates this post hoc justification: “It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God, and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”⁹⁷

Sociologist Christian Smith claims that pre-rational beliefs, narratives, and relationships are central to what it means to be human. Human lives and knowledge are inevitably founded upon assumptions and beliefs that cannot be empirically verified nor proved with certainty.⁹⁸ Neither are these assumptions and beliefs universal — at least in the sense of being present everywhere — which is empirically untrue.⁹⁹ The abortion debate largely exemplifies this: Should a woman have freedom to dispose of the baby/mass of tissue? At what point does someone become a living human? The answers to these questions are unverifiable since any “evidence,” whether for

⁹⁵ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity... And Why it Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 30–32.

⁹⁶ Kinnaman and Lyons, 38.

⁹⁷ Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130; quoted in McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 57.

⁹⁸ Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 46–48.

⁹⁹ Smith, 48–52.

or against a stance, is understood through one's basic beliefs and assumptions.¹⁰⁰ As Smith notes, "the ability of data to prove or disprove a theory is problematic when the data themselves are always and profoundly theory-laden."¹⁰¹ The assumptions and beliefs of individuals, societies, and institutions have substantial consequences — and often become so ingrained that they are invisible.¹⁰² Humankind and culture cannot be properly understood without this understanding. Not only are humans believing creatures, but they are narrative creatures who both share and are made by stories that orient their lives and convey meaning.¹⁰³ People hold a variety of both personal and "big picture" narratives, which may or may not be consistent with each other.¹⁰⁴ There are also *metanarratives*, i.e. an all-encompassing story about purpose, origin, nature, the destiny of humanity, and moral order which governs and plots all other stories and narratives.¹⁰⁵ Sociologist Roy Baumeister's research shows that in order for the human quest for meaning to be satisfied, people need answers to four questions: (1) *Identity*: Who am I? (2) *Value*: Do I Matter? (3) *Purpose*: Why am I here? (4) *Agency*: Can I make a difference?¹⁰⁶ Narratives, of all sizes, bring meaning to life and answer these questions to some degree. As Smith argues, people "cannot live without stories, big stories finally, to tell us what is real and significant and to know

¹⁰⁰ Although the debate is more nuanced than shown above, it cuts to much of the heart of the issues. Christian Smith, 50–52.

¹⁰¹ Smith, 52.

¹⁰² Smith, 58–60.

¹⁰³ Smith, 63–67. Smith lists off several narratives to demonstrate this, such as the American Experiment narrative, the Capitalist Prosperity narrative, the Progressive Socialism narrative, the Expressive Romantic narrative, the Scientific Enlightenment narrative, and the Christian metanarrative. See 67–73.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, 74–76.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Roy Baumeister, *Meanings of Life* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1991), 29–57.

who we are, where we are, what we are doing, and why.”¹⁰⁷ Although narratives shape beliefs, reason, and interpretation of evidence, people can still be changed and persuaded — in fact it happens all the time. Smith’s anthropology (and epistemology) challenges people to be aware of their stories and why debates and discussions can be so difficult; the challenge for people today is to figure out how to discuss rival narratives, persuade the other, and live together.¹⁰⁸ While this research critiques the human-as-thinker model, it points towards at least a human-as-believer model, if not also the beginnings of a human-as-desirer model.¹⁰⁹ Despite the ambiguity, the following neuroscience research evidently supports the human-as-desirer model.

II. Neuroscience

Neuroscience supports the claims that humans are holistic — not only are humans thinking beings, but more centrally (or essentially) are emotional, embodied, narrative, and relational/social beings. The various research also supports a concept of the human person as anti- or post-Cartesian. Antonio Damasio’s profound neuroscience research on the prefrontal cortex illuminates the role of emotion in cognition. Patients with damage to their prefrontal cortex often become emotionally detached with a severe personality change.¹¹⁰ One patient could

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals*, 151.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, 89–94.

¹⁰⁹ Although Christian Smith verbatim states that “at bottom, we humans are all really believers,” his approach has intimations of a humans-as-desirers model, evidenced through the focus on narrative, bodily practices and rituals, and interdependence on relationships. Regardless, it poses a clear rejection of “the Enlightenment ideas of foundationalist knowledge, universal reason, and the autonomously choosing individual.” See Smith, 150–155.

¹¹⁰ Ian G. Barbour, “Neuroscience, Artificial Intelligence, Human Nature” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 249–280, 257. Also see Antonio Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: C.P. Putnam, 1994).

understand the appropriate emotions he should have, yet could not feel them, allowing emotion to not forcefully affect his reasoning. In a person-as-thinker model, this should have allowed for better, and more rational, decisions and judgments — yet the opposite occurred. These patients often were unable to make decisions or made foolish ones in their own personal lives — even though they retained their IQ and moral understanding of right and wrong. The conclusion is simple: emotions, including desires and intuitions, are necessary for proper rational decisions. Joseph LeDoux, similarly, sees emotions as central to humanity since they are critical for survival, necessarily interconnected to most parts of the brain, and complex — since the brain has several different “emotion” systems for different purposes.¹¹¹

Humans are also essentially social beings. Marc Jeannerod’s research highlights the intrinsic social and communicative nature of humans, and also sheds insights into the philosophical problem of other minds. First, Jeannerod reveals that humans naturally have the ability to recognize others’ intentions (“mirror neurons”) because the system for detecting intentions, beliefs, or actions of others is the same system used for the self. “We can know what people think (or believe, or intend),” Jeannerod argues, “because we are able internally to simulate the states of their minds.”¹¹² Social communication involves shared simultaneous (though not identical) mental states between individuals in order for mutual understanding. Second, the brain cannot always recognize the origin of intent — having a neural representation of an intention and attributing it to the self are two different processes that aren’t necessarily linked.¹¹³ For example,

¹¹¹ Joseph E. LeDoux, “Emotions: A View through the Brain” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 101–117, 113–115; also Joseph E. LeDoux, “Emotions: How I’ve Looked for Them in the Brain” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 41–44, 43–44.

¹¹² Marc Jeannerod, “Limits to the Naturalization of Mental States?” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 120.

¹¹³ Jeannerod, 121.

one experiment told subjects to recognize whether hand movements were theirs or the experimenters after following movement instructions. In two easy cases, the subjects were almost always correct: (1) when the experimenter's hand did not follow the correct instructions, and (2) when they were actually viewing their hand. However, when the experimenter's hand followed the instructions, thirty percent of the time normal subjects misattributed the movements to themselves; for Schizophrenics, who tend to incorporate external events into their own experience, the percent raised to eighty. Together, these two insights reveal how the brain is naturally equipped for social action, and also falsifies "the Cartesian dictum that one knows one's own mind (intentions) directly and indubitably."¹¹⁴ Leslie Brothers' research, mainly around the role of the amygdala in social function, similarly asserts that human brains are equipped for social participation.¹¹⁵ More so, both congenitally blind (i.e. patients born blind) and deafferented patients (i.e. those who have lost vision, and touch and bodily awareness from the neck down) gesture in conversations, hinting that part of being human is essentially the relationships with others, further giving evidence for human intersubjectivity.¹¹⁶

Humans are also essentially embodied. The research of both Marc Jeannerod and Michael Arbib explore the action-oriented nature of human cognition. For example, Jeannerod cites studies that show how mentally imagining or simulating action leads to direct activation of the motor system; in other words, thinking of an action resembles intentionally executing an

¹¹⁴ Nancey Murphy, "Introduction" in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, xxiii.

¹¹⁵ Leslie A. Brothers, "A Neuroscientific Perspective on Human Sociality" in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 67–74.

¹¹⁶ Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 111–129; quoted in Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 66–67.

action.¹¹⁷ Thus, he shares neurophysiological evidence of the moral dictum “to intend is to act.”¹¹⁸ Arbib asserts that perception is an action-oriented restructuring of the world rather than a passive reception of data, and that several types of mental events are dependent on various physiological processes.¹¹⁹ Arbib’s research supports “a pragmatic as opposed to a contemplative approach to epistemology.”¹²⁰ Shaun Gallagher also cites evidence for this connection. First, neonates imitate facial expressions of others as soon as a few minutes after birth — long before language or abstract thought develops. Not only does this reveal an essential relational aspect of humanity, but also that even before newborns attain a theory of the mind, they already have an embodied understanding of other people.¹²¹ Thus, human developmental research rejects people as disembodied from other minds and minds in general as disembodied.¹²²

The diversity of neuroscientists also points to humans as essentially narrative creatures. This is particularly evident when it comes to episodic memory. Lesions in the hippocampus can severely impact episodic memory — the “narrative” memory that gives context to experiences and a continued sense of identity.¹²³ Alzheimer’s patients, or any patients with severe loss of memory, reveal the devastating effects of not being able to construct new narratives.¹²⁴ Without being able

¹¹⁷ Marc Jeannerod, “The Cognitive Way to Action” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 57–65, 64–66.

¹¹⁸ Murphy, “Introduction,” xviii.

¹¹⁹ Michael A. Arbib, “Towards a Neuroscience of the Person” in *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 77–100.

¹²⁰ Murphy, “Introduction,” xxiii.

¹²¹ Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, 244–245; quoted in Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 66–68.

¹²² Vasudevi Reddy, *How Infants Know Minds* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4–5; quoted in Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 71.

¹²³ Arbib, “Towards a Neuroscience of the Person,” 77–100, 77.

¹²⁴ Oliver Sack’s patient — the “lost mariner” — could not actively create new long-term memories. Thus, he could not experience the passing of time, form deep connections with people (outside of his brother — the only person still

to form memory narratively, every event would be new, thus inhibiting identity (re)formation and experiencing the present.¹²⁵ Similarly, Damasio also notes that construction of a narrative, including personal memories and intentions, is essential for any type of continuity of identity and consciousness.¹²⁶ This narrative is not simply a recollection of past events, however; it is actively reconstructed and influenced by re-interpreted past events, future goals and plans, and narratives in culture, religion, and so on.¹²⁷ Narratives, both personal and communal, are vital to what it means to be human, survive, and have an identity.

Summary & Conclusion

This interdisciplinary approach to anthropology paints a more holistic picture of humanity than either of the person-as-thinker or person-as-believer models portray. Theological anthropology hints at a person-as-desirer model through the explanation of sin and the human condition as misguided desire, the mission/purpose of humanity as participating in the gospel through creative witness in word and deed, salvation as seen as including more than just mental or spiritual aspects, and how the ultimate telos of humanity is achieved through perfectly reorienting desire and love. The social sciences and neuroscience support the notion of humans as essentially affective, communal/relational, narrative, and embodied, alongside believing and thinking.

alive from the years he can recall — who is usually shocked to see he has aged fifty-some years overnight), or have a clear representation of the self. Most evidently evidenced by his (frequent) freak outs when he realized he was an old man and not nineteen years old. See Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (New York: Touchstone, 1998), 23–41.

¹²⁵ Of course, most patients only have partial memory loss, and thus have varying degrees of these symptoms.

¹²⁶ Barbour, “Neuroscience, Artificial Intelligence, Human Nature,” 249–280, 257. Also see Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*.

¹²⁷ Barbour, 258.

Reasoning is never neutral, but necessarily affected by pre-rational factors of belief that reason tends to justify post hoc. This anthropological “portrait” points to three apologetic implications that should be considered alongside the larger work of E/N proponents: (1) apologetics is (and should be) about more than simply logical and rational arguments, (2) apologetics should take a creative approach, and (3) apologetics is the task of the Church, not just individuals.

CHAPTER FOUR

APOLOGETIC REFLECTIONS: PERSUASION, CREATIVITY, COMMUNITY

Introduction

In Douglas Wilson's allegory *Persuasions*, Wilson describes the Road that runs in two directions: eastward with a gradual incline that leads to the City, and westward towards the Abyss.¹ Many were headed down the wrong path towards the Abyss, but it was not always evident since it winds through various canyons. The Master of the City displayed signposts warning travelers of the dangers and instructed his servants to try to persuade the travelers in the reverse direction. Those quite skilled at the endeavor learned to answer each traveler according to their own objections and personal situations. Of course, this is the situation apologists (and all Christians) find themselves in. How can we best lead them to the city?

Different anthropological models lead to different answers. As the prior chapter concludes, the person-as-desirer model fits best with the interdisciplinary anthropological research. The resulting three apologetic implications can be succinctly rewritten in three dichotomies: (1) persuasion over argumentation, (2) creativity over rigidity, and (3) community over individuality.² If apologetics is more than simply logical and rational argumentation, then it involves persuasion. If apologetics should be creative, it resists overly rigid approaches. If apologetics is the task of the Church, and humans are social beings, then it involves community, not just individuals. Each of these dichotomies should be understood in that the latter is

¹ Douglas Wilson, *Persuasions: A Dream of Reason Meeting Unbelief* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997), 7.

² Wilson's allegory illuminates the three dichotomies: the task of the servants (i.e. the Church) is to convince (or persuade) others contextually (viz. creatively) to go to the City.

subsumed by the former. For example, apologetics as persuasion does not omit logical and rational argumentation but reveals it as one means of persuasion among many.

Although the person-as-desirer model fits best, all three of the major apologetic methods are valuable for apologetics. For example, *hard* E/N methodologies tend to omit logical and rational argumentation altogether — yet the anthropological research shows this type of reasoning is still sometimes effectual, just not as influential as the former models suppose. So, there is a place for much of the work of traditional apologists. Similarly, each anthropological model ended in different, yet important, apologetic tasks. Defense of the faith, according to the previous chapter, can include showing the faith to be rational, showing Christian belief to be true, and witnessing to others so they will follow Christ. However, the former two tasks are subsumed by the latter — and not always necessary. In other words, defense of the faith is always witnessing so that others may follow Christ, and sometimes that includes explicitly showing the Christian faith to be rational and/or true. The apologetic task, then, can be accomplished through a variety of means of persuasion, yet is context-dependent and fulfilled in light of the larger Church community. The rest of the chapter outlines and proposes an eclectic and holistic apologetic approach influenced by anthropological research in terms of persuasion, creativity, and community.³

³ In a sense, this approach may be considered an extreme *soft* E/N approach since it not only allows for the other methods and means, but is based on a person-as-desirer anthropological model. The critique and revision of method is not aimed primarily at traditional or presuppositional methods, but against *hard* approaches and faulty or inaccurate anthropological models.

Persuasion over Argumentation: Attack the Elephant

If apologetics is (or should be) characterized by more than logical and rational argumentation, then a more accurate term is *persuasion*.⁴ Following Jonathan Haidt’s analogy in the previous chapter, each person is moved by their elephant and the rider tends to make post hoc rationalizations for it. In order to persuade people, the apologist should primarily appeal to, or “attack,” the elephant. Apologetics is usually viewed as pre-evangelism, i.e. a clearing of the intellectual debris that prevent people from coming to Christ. However, there are many other types of “debris” that stymie people from the faith, such as painful personal experiences. The debris is often difficult to recognize, yet it drives the elephant that the apologist wants to impact. How can apologists attack the elephant? As the next section will show, creativity can lead to several unique strategies, but nine particular means (or modes) of persuasion are especially relevant to the apologist based on the previous chapter’s research. The first three means of persuasion are popularized by Aristotle: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.⁵ The following three modes, i.e. *kairos*, *mythos*, and *topos*, are sometimes referenced alongside Aristotle’s triad and are especially relevant for effective persuasion.⁶ Lastly, a specifically Christian approach reveals

⁴ Benno van den Toren agrees with the terminology since persuasion is complex, varied, and includes emotional and moral components. Technically, one could argue that argumentation can include those components as well; however, this is mainly opposing logical (or rational) argumentation as the only (or main) source of persuasion. See Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 178.

⁵ See Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. H.C. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 2004), esp. 16–17. Although Aristotle popularized these means of persuasion, common usage today tends to slightly drift from his views. So, the following articulations of each mode are not necessarily Aristotelian despite being drawn from his concepts.

⁶ See “Kairos” and “Commonplace” in Jay Heinrichs, *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion*, 4th ed (New York: Broadway Books, 2020), 419–423. The previous chapter also gives credence for persuasion through story (*mythos*), relevance (*topos*), and timing or appropriateness (*kairos*).

tropos, *typos*, and *theos* as appropriate means of persuasion for the apologist.⁷ The nine modes may overlap and interact with each other, but they each offer a distinct “tool” for the apologist to reflect on. Together these modes shape an appropriate apologetic approach that recognizes the holistic nature of each person. The rest of this section will explore the nine means of persuasion in the apologetic process.

The first mode is *logos*, persuasion by means of logic and coherency.⁸ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to establish the faith as coherent, rational, logical, and/or true. This can be accomplished in many ways: rational or logical arguments for theism or the Christian God, explanation of the Christian faith, or answers to objections or “defeaters” to Christianity, among others. A traditional view of apologetics tends to view this as the sole (or primary) mean of persuasion.⁹ Although the addition of *logos* may appear inconsistent given the former appeals against the primacy of rationalistic thinking, this mode is nonetheless essential. There are many people who genuinely view the Christian faith as irrational, illogical, and incoherent — whether or not that is the *sole* reason for disbelief. *Logos*, by itself, rarely causes people to change their views.¹⁰ This mode is most effective when among other means of persuasion.

⁷ The previous chapter notes the importance of the way arguments are made (*tropos*), gospel embodiment (*typos*), and the role of God in persuasion (*theos*).

⁸ The Greek *λόγος* can be translated as a “word,” “speech,” “account,” or “reason.” See Maurice A. Robinson and Mark A. House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek: Revised and Updated* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 223.

⁹ This is explored in-depth in chapter two.

¹⁰ Evidence for this was explored in chapter three, especially through the research on post hoc justification. Haidt’s research revealed that people are more likely to be persuaded, for example, if from a close friend they trust (*ethos*) or a narrative (*mythos*). See Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 55–57, 79–91.

The second mode is *ethos*, persuasion by means of character and authority.¹¹ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to establish their credentials. Why should a person trust the apologist? Why do his/her thoughts matter at all? This mode seeks to answer these questions. People will often look to the character, authority, and trustworthiness of the person persuading in order to “verify” their claims. The failure of this area results in diminished impact and influence in persuasion.¹² For example, very few today look to Adolf Hitler for moral advice — simply because he is not trustworthy in that area. Even if he had something of worth to say, it would quickly be overshadowed by the fact that he is not a person who one should be or want to be persuaded by. Similarly, the Church is often a hindrance to people in their faith journey, whether deserved or not.¹³ Christians, and by extension Christianity, are often viewed negatively, labeled in America as archaic, anti-scientific, immoral (especially regarding sexuality), judgmental, politically conservative, hypocritical, insensitive, and so on.¹⁴ The apologist should be aware of what a person or community assumes of them, so they can work towards building credibility where necessary. For example, an apologist combating the notion of Christianity as anti-scientific may appeal to their authority as a scientist. There are several other ways this credibility can be built as well: living a holy lifestyle above reproach, being lovingly involved in the life of the person or

¹¹ The Greek ἦθος and ἔθος can be translated as a “habit” or “custom.” This root extends to ἠθικός which means “character.” See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 101, 106.

¹² A recent example of this is the controversy surrounding Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM). Dr. Max Baker-Hytch, a RZIM apologist, sent a letter to the leaders of the ministry explaining that they have “lost trust ‘internally and externally’ because of its handling of recent scandals involving its founder.” The tattered reputation of both the founder and the ministry has limited their influence as of late. See Julie Roys, “RZIM Apologist Sends Stunning Letter: Says Ministry Has Lost Trust & Needs to Make ‘Meaningful Reparations’”, last modified December 12, 2020. <https://julieroys.com/rzim-apologist-letter-lost-trust-reparations/>.

¹³ This was notably shown in the previous chapter, especially through the demographic research that personal experiences with Christians/church often led to negative perceptions of the faith.

¹⁴ Many of these themes are explored and corroborated by the Barna Group. See Kinnaman, *unChristian*, esp. 28–30.

community, meeting people’s practical needs, or sharing of one’s own personal faith experiences that lead to perceived credibility, among others.¹⁵ In most cases, a personal relationship with a person or community proves most fruitful if the apologist is recognized as trustworthy.¹⁶

The third mode is *pathos*, persuasion by means of emotions and values.¹⁷ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to appeal to emotions and values and remove any experiential roadblocks to the faith. This is perhaps most foreign to traditional apologists where emotion is contrasted with rationality.¹⁸ If an idea doesn’t feel right emotionally or intuitively, it will often be rejected before being seriously (or rationally) considered.¹⁹ The ability to capture the emotions and values of an audience can prompt more openness and reception, shift moods and perceptions, and lead to an emotional commitment.²⁰ This can be accomplished through diction, tone, analogies, humor, surprise, compelling images, storytelling, worship, prayer, sympathy, and a plethora of other ways.²¹ The idea is to point to personal experiences, feelings, and values for persuasiveness. However, many people have experiential “debris” that prevents them from coming to the faith. Perhaps the most “debris” comes from a person’s (or community’s) painful

¹⁵ This is reminiscent of the Apostle Paul’s words: “The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you.” (2 Cor. 3:2 NLT).

¹⁶ Haidt’s research emphasized that people are more likely to be persuaded if from a close friend they trust. See Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 55–57, 79–91. Similarly, another study showed that the people most resistant and antagonistic to the faith often joined the church due to the “persistence and long-term commitment of a Christian toward them” (99). See Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*, 99–100.

¹⁷ The Greek *πάθος* can be translated as “experience,” “feeling,” or “passion.” See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 259.

¹⁸ See Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 20–21.

¹⁹ All the examples and research in the prior chapter on post hoc justifications support this claim.

²⁰ Heinrichs, *Thank You for Arguing*, 416.

²¹ A great example of this is Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. For more specific examples, see Heinrichs, *Thank You for Arguing*.

experiences. If a person were ostracized from their church due to their sexual orientation, why would they want to follow Christ? If an oppressed community's abuse were justified through Christianity, why would they want to be a Christian? Deep, often undetectable, emotional pain affects people's view of Christianity, whether directly or indirectly related to Christianity and the Church.²² If and when appropriate (*kairos*), the apologist can gently and respectfully try to address the pain and hurt, specifically after they have a positive relationship and the apologist is seen as trustworthy (*ethos*).²³ Alongside the appeals above, addressing these experiential roadblocks can allow for a more serious consideration of Christianity.

The fourth mode is *kairos*, persuasion by means of timing and appropriateness.²⁴ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to selectively choose *when* to apply other means of persuasion. Certainly, there is an improper time and place for persuasive speech and argumentation. The Westboro Baptist Church, in a grotesque example of this, picketed a funeral of a homosexual teen who committed suicide while holding up signs that read "God hates fags."²⁵ There is wisdom in knowing when and how to present information. This echoes Jesus' prompt to "be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:6 ESV). Improper application and timeliness of persuasion methods reinforces held beliefs and hinders consideration of the

²² On top of the demographic research from the previous chapter, another study shows that the people most resistant and antagonistic to the faith usually have intense emotional stories surrounding their dismissal, whether directly or indirectly. See Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*, 97–98.

²³ The apologist should be careful and patient. If not handled cautiously, this may have the opposite effect. Healing or re-framing experiential pain is usually not an easy or short process and may never even occur this side of paradise. More than not, this may simply mean listening or being a presence.

²⁴ The Greek *καιρός* can be translated as "fitting season," "time," or "opportunity." See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 187.

²⁵ The Westboro Baptist Church is wrong in more ways than just their timing, but this method is clearly ineffective for persuasion of the family.

presented view.²⁶ For example, in a formal debate at a university, *logos* should be the central and primary means of persuasion, whereas the overuse of *pathos* or *ethos* may be viewed as fallacious.²⁷ Conversely, in an everyday conversation with a friend or child, over-reliance on *logos* is usually not necessary; sharing stories or testimonies (*mythos*) may be a better option.

The fifth mode is *mythos*, persuasion by means of narrative and testimony.²⁸ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to affirm, defend, and explain the faith through stories. This mode can be accomplished in several ways: fiction stories, allegories, myths, metaphors, parables, anecdotes, personal testimonies, stories of others' experiences, and inviting people to re-frame their own story, among others. The editors of *Futurist* magazine once stated that the most valuable workers in the twenty-first century would be storytellers. It's quite easy now to see why: humans are essentially narrative creatures, we make and are made by stories, they are fundamental to how we understand ourselves and the world around us.²⁹ Similarly, the Christian faith was passed down and understood through stories. As Alister McGrath asserts, "we can not 'demythologize' Christianity, in that an irreducible narrative serves as both its heart and its backbone. Narrative acts as both the medium and the message in Christian apologetics."³⁰ Christians, then, have a unique place in culture, they have the ultimate story – not to mention a breadth of smaller stories – in their arsenal. Although apologists such as C.S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and John Bunyan provide great examples of *mythos*, Jesus of Nazareth is actually

²⁶ Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 184.

²⁷ In this type of setting, arguments from emotion and authority are fallacious as they alone do not lead to truth, as persuasive as it may be. Alongside *logos*, however, they may make the argument even more persuasive.

²⁸ The Greek *μῦθος* can be translated as "idle tale," "fable," or "story." See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 240.

²⁹ This is largely supported by the research in the former chapter.

³⁰ McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 15.

one of the most prolific storytellers of the faith.³¹ Stories and parables are persuasive as they often have a way of circumventing more direct forms of communication; instead of abruptly stating an idea or proposition, a narrative entices the reader to engage and explore the topic with much greater nuance and attention, which explains how they are highly effective in changing ideas and affecting behaviors. *Mythos* also includes other uses, such as illustrating a point, suggesting solutions to a problem, planting ideas, bypassing resistance, and reframing or redefining problems.³² Even though stories have historically been closely aligned with apologetics, traditional apologetics often tends to dismiss narrative as a proper mode, likely due to the lingering influence of Enlightenment rationalism on evangelicalism and the preference for propositional revelation over the narrative genre.³³

The sixth mode is *topos*, persuasion by means of theme and relevance.³⁴ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to show the faith as relevant and build a bridge from peoples' lives to the gospel. Aristotle originally referred to *topos* as an audience's common opinion, the place where any argument should begin.³⁵ *Topos*, in literature, refers to a common theme that authors re-work to fit an audience.³⁶ Together these more or less describe the idea: an apologetic method should be *relevant* to the audience. Both for clarity and effectiveness. This can be accomplished in

³¹ For an excellent resource on *mythos* in Christian apologetics, see McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*.

³² Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling, Volume One: Foundations and Practice of Compassionate Soul Care* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2002), 376.

³³ For the effect of rationalism on narratives and evangelicalism, see Bebbington, "Evangelical Christianity and Modernism"; and McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 12–15.

³⁴ The Greek τόπος can be translated as "a place" or "opportunity." See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 343.

³⁵ See "commonplace" in Heinrichs, *Thank You for Arguing*, 419.

³⁶ For a biblical example of how a *topos* is used, see James R. McConnell Jr., *The topos of Divine Testimony in Luke-Acts* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014). Also see Terence Y. Mullins, "Topos as a New Testament Form," *JBL* 99, no. 4 (December 1980): 541–547.

multiple ways: using a common theme, story, or metaphor; explaining a concept in a way a person can understand; contextualizing the gospel message to the audience; utilizing means of persuasion that are most suitable to the person; and addressing the questions and needs a person finds relevant, among others. The failure of this mode often results in dismissal of the faith (and a poor missiology) since it is either incomprehensible or insignificant.³⁷ A defense should be built from common ground (viz. common notions) between the apologist and the audience.³⁸ Inevitably, then, the approach will look different depending on the person or group.

The seventh mode is *tropos*, persuasion by means of way and manner.³⁹ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to persuade in a way concordant with Christ. As the Pauline literature emphasized in the previous chapter, the *way* an argument or appeal is made greatly matters. Any apologetic approach that humiliates, dehumanizes, coerces, or leads to violence is misguided.⁴⁰

Glen Scorgie explains this unloving manner of defending the faith:

“If we offend someone by our aggressive tone, we are likely to say, like the raspy old mobster Don Corleone in the classic Godfather movies, after unleashing violence and murder on his enemies, ‘It’s not personal; it’s just business’... [It is] a hard-nosed, in-your-face determination to dismantle the positions of unbelievers, expose their illogical

³⁷ This is evident when extended to the global scene. For example, in twentieth century Africa, the main theological questions raised relate to identity: how the belief of their ancestors and what it means to be African relates to the Christian God and what it means to be Christian. Traditional apologetic methods often fail to answer the apologetic questions of Contemporary Africa. Traditional approaches seem awkward and out of place. In many ways, this is simultaneously happening even in the Western world, specifically in postmodern settings. See Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 3–4.

³⁸ The prior chapter revealed this was the strategy of Paul. For further arguments on why common ground is necessary, and why the critiques of thinkers such as Barth and Van Til are flawed or irrelevant, see Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 190–195.

³⁹ The Greek *τρόπος* can be translated as “manner,” “way,” or “manner of life.” See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 350.

⁴⁰ Glen Scorgie shares a personal story where apologetics led to this outcome, see Glen G. Scorgie, “Confrontational Apologetics versus Grace-Filled Persuasion,” *Perichoresis* 10, no. 1 (2012): 23–39, 23–25.

or untenable nature, and ensure that truth triumphs. It is relatively indifferent to who gets run over or coerced—who gets shamed or humiliated—in the process.”⁴¹

The *how*, not just the *what*, of apologetics should be carefully considered. The above reveals a possibility of when “winning an argument” becomes the ultimate apologetic goal instead of people following and becoming more like Christ. All apologetic methods and appeals should be loving and emulate the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23, 1 Cor. 13:1-7) — especially in gentleness and kindness (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:23-24). Speaking truth is not enough, it must be done *in love* (Eph. 4:15). Apologists should persuade in a manner that reflects God, the ultimate model of truth and love. Thomas Aquinas exemplifies this approach through his manner of discussing opposing ideas: fully understanding the others’ point of view, listening respectfully, abstaining from deceit in argumentation, refraining from jargon, and seeking clarity and charity.⁴²

The eighth mode is *typos*, persuasion by means of imitation and embodiment.⁴³ The apologist, in this mode, seeks to defend the faith through embodying the gospel. The totality of a person’s life may be the best defense of the faith. Sadly, the opposite is true as well: failing to embody the gospel often pushes people away from the faith. As Gandhi once stated, “I would suggest first of all that all of you Christians, missionaries and all begin to live more like Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴ Even though he appreciated and respected the teaching of Christ, he was disturbed by

⁴¹ Scorgie, 25–27.

⁴² This is Thomas Aquinas’s spirit of *disputatio*, which alongside his specific method of argumentation, comprised his method of disputation. Together these reflect the idea of truth and love. See Terry Muck, *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 118–124.

⁴³ The Greek *τύπος* can be translated as “type,” “image,” or “model.” See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 351.

⁴⁴ See E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1925).

the actions of Christians. The Barna Group studied churchgoers to see if their attitudes and actions were more Christlike or pharisaical, and the results are sobering.⁴⁵ Over half of the self-described Christians were both pharisaical in attitude and action; only fourteen percent were Christlike in both attitude and action.⁴⁶ The sad reality, especially evidenced through the attitudes towards Christianity in the previous chapter, is that people are pushed farther away from Christ from failure to imitate Christ. Imitating Christ's love is a powerful means of persuasion that may overcome several different types of barriers. In several of the biblical passages from the last chapter, this was the general idea of a Christian defense: living in such a way, in word and deed, that people are drawn to the faith. If anything, this is a call to holiness — a holiness only made possible through God.

The ninth mode is *theos*, persuasion by means of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ This mode emphasizes the role of God in persuasion. Christians would be amiss to believe it is solely themselves who are at work in the conversion and persuasion process. As Jesus announced, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (Jn. 6:44 ESV). John Stackhouse Jr. describes the (in)effectiveness of human persuasion in conversion,

“[Conversion] either in terms of fundamental redirection or in terms of full maturity cannot be accomplished by our own powers of persuasion... Therefore our human responsibility and opportunity is twofold. First, it is to bear witness, to demonstrate in our living and to articulate in our speaking the good news of new life under God's

⁴⁵ Pharisaical attitudes included items such as “I believe we should stand against those who are opposed to Christian values” and “People who follow God's rules are better than those who do not”; whereas Christlike attitudes included items such as “I see God-given value in every person, regardless of their past or present condition” and “I feel compassion for people who are not following God and doing immoral things”. For further information, see Barna, *Churchless*, 178–179.

⁴⁶ The remaining results reveal 21% were Christlike in attitude but pharisaical in action and 14% were pharisaical in attitude and Christlike in action.

⁴⁷ The Greek *θεός* is translated as “God.” See Robinson and House, *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, 174.

reign... Second, we are to offer all we can to help each other in moving toward the goal of full conversion, the goal of full maturity and everlasting shalom.”⁴⁸

Human persuasion and witness remain important, but God is the ultimate persuader. Long before an apologist arrives, God was already at work in persuasion. As the Body of Christ mediates Jesus’ presence on earth through the Spirit (*typos*), Christians are empowered to witness and defense. Yet God continuously draws people in, even without Christian presence. Ravi Zacharias, for example, explains how many people in the Middle East are still coming to Christ through dreams and visions despite the threat of death.⁴⁹ An encounter with Christ is often all that is needed for a person to be ultimately persuaded (cf. Jn. 1:43-50; Ac. 9:1-30).

Regardless of the breadth of persuasive tools at their disposal, apologetic methodologies tend to focus on only a select few modes. This presents two problems: (1) the utilized modes may not match the appropriate needs or roadblocks of a person or community, and (2) a failure to utilize a mode may actually lead to the opposite of the intended outcome. The apologist able to recognize the need for and utilize the appropriate mean(s) of persuasion, alongside God, will be the most effective in attacking the elephant. However, even then there is no guarantee of persuasion. Even when Jesus walked on Earth not all people were persuaded. Neither is there a “perfect” approach. As the next section reveals, defending the faith is an *art* rather than a *science*.

⁴⁸ Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics*, 81–83.

⁴⁹ For testimonies of this, see Tom Doyle and Greg Webster, *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

Creativity over Rigidity: Foxes are the Future

The Ancient Greek Poet Archilochus once said, "a fox knows many things, but a hedgehog one important thing." Over the years, this proverb has been utilized to differentiate people into *foxes* who craftily formulate various ideas into several strategies versus the unwavering *hedgehogs* who embrace a single idea/strategy and yield it masterfully.⁵⁰ Stated differently, hedgehogs are *rigid* while foxes are *creative*. Creativity is "the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others."⁵¹ On the contrary, rigidity resists adopting and changing to the circumstances. When applied to the field of apologetics, the fox and hedgehog can represent *soft* and *hard* apologists, respectively. Like the fox, soft apologists are eclectic and open to various methods; they are creative. Creativity, in this context, involves drawing and selecting from a wide array of apologetic strategies for specific audiences. Since persuasiveness is subjective to each individual, the application of apologetic arguments and strategies should be context-dependent and eclectic. Although apologists are often trained and practice as hedgehogs, the complex world is in desperate need of foxes. Even if individual apologists specialize in a certain method, strategy, or means of persuasion like the hedgehog, they should imitate the creative fox by adjusting their approach to their audience. If apologetics is about creative persuasion, then the defense of the faith should be very contextualized.

This is not to say the specialized research and work of "hedgehogs" are bad — in fact, they are very needed. However, when the theory of apologetics is applied and practiced, a variety of

⁵⁰ For examples of this, see Isaiah Berlin's essay "The Fox and the Hedgehog: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) and Stephen Jay Gould's *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister's Pox: Mending the Gap Between Science and the Humanities* (Easton: Harmony, 2003).

⁵¹ Robert E. Franken, *Human Motivation*, 3rd ed. (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1994), 396.

methods are often useful and perhaps necessary.⁵² All three apologetic methodologies offer useful strategies in different situations, whether it be through logical arguments or sharing of stories. An effective apologetic approach should also share the aims of each apologetic method: demonstrating the rationality of Christian belief, that Christian belief is true, and that one ought to commit their life to Jesus. To match the context, apologists should adopt various parts of each apologetic method as they see fit. However, this should not lead to an uncritical amalgamation of the various views by forcing isolated and contradictory ideas into a larger system. Rather, they should be prepared to “attack” each locus of humanity the views uphold: person as thinker, believer, desirer; the head, the heart, and the gut. In any given circumstance, the apologist may need to recognize where a person’s resistance or “debris” is located. The debris could be intellectual, emotional, or instinctual. Most likely, a mixture is present. The creative apologist can choose a strategy which matches the context and “debris”.

If apologetics is fundamentally about witnessing to others, and not solely about logical argumentation, then the apologist may take on a variety of forms or roles. At times, the apologist may look like a counselor, bringing healing while inquiring about the deeper roots of one’s belief and behavior; or friend, caring for and walking alongside another in their faith journey; or storyteller and performer, living out their faith life and telling stories – of their own life, of others’ lives, and of parables or great fiction stories; or coach, pushing for action instead of apathy or passivity; or teacher and debater, bringing clarity and coherency to systems while pointing out inconsistencies or deficiencies in others. Since apologetics is about people, and people are multifaceted, a proper apologetic approach, too, should be multifaceted.

⁵² Montgomery, “A Short History of Apologetics,” 27–28.

Overly rigid approaches are often ineffective at persuading a person and are even in danger of pushing people further away. For example, imagine a woman who suffered from paternal abuse as a child, and thus holds a subconscious distaste towards the “Father God” in Christianity. While talking to an apologist who tries to debate her lack of belief, the apologist offers several logical and rational arguments for the faith waiting for her to concede intellectually. Even if all the evidence the apologist shares leads to the likely conclusion of Christianity, the woman’s painful past is not dealt with, and she is perhaps worse off as she now associates Christians as forceful, controlling, and argumentative like her father. In another example, imagine a man who is critically searching for reasons to believe the faith is rational and logical, yet when he asks a Christian about their reasons for belief, they simply offer up their personal testimony and observance of miraculous healing services. Although these are not necessarily bad reasons, the man is left with the impression that Christians are blindly following their faith without rational evidence for it. If apologists lack the humility to believe that their method is not perfect in all (or most) situations, then their approach may yield unintended and harmful consequences — regardless of if the method sometimes works. For this reason, apologists who can draw from several strategies and wisely choose a fitting one are more likely to yield positive results in the practice of apologetics. Of course, every person will have their own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to creative persuasion, which becomes beneficial when apologetics is viewed as the role of the Church, and not solely the individual.

Community over Individuality: It Takes a Village (of Geese)

Geese fly farther together. When they fly in their iconic v-shape formation, the leader creates lift for the birds behind, and in return the geese behind will honk to motivate the leader, even

switching out leaders often to prevent fatigue. Even in the case where one bird falls ill and moves behind the pack, at least two other birds will fall back to support the one fallen behind. Similarly, African proverbial wisdom — in an acute critique against western individualism — avows that “it takes a village to raise a child.”⁵³ The combined wisdom from the example of geese and the African proverb describes the importance of community and collaboration for growth and effectiveness. Together, these two summarize, more or less, the importance of community in apologetics: people are meant to be and grow within community, and the apologetic endeavor becomes wholly more effective through collaboration. Even though community is regarded as valuable, oftentimes the communal aspect is lost or disparaged in practice, especially, as will be argued below, at the expense of apologetics. As with all the dichotomies in this chapter, the latter is subsumed by the former; individuality is re-situated, but not neglected, within a framework of community.

As implicated from the previous chapter, apologetics is the task of the Church. Even though the Church includes both communities and persons, emphasis is primarily given to individuals in apologetic approaches. Most of the apologetic literature highlights individualistic methods, viz. *persona contra persona*, where the method is for an individual conversing with another individual, or at the very least an individual to a passive audience, such as through debate or narrative means. Although these hold much value, they neglect the rich possibilities of a community-oriented approach. The counter-emphasis on community here is not to degrade individualistic approaches — in fact they are essential — but rather to re-situate them into a

⁵³ Although the exact origin of this phrase is unknown, several African proverbs reflect the spirit of this saying. At the very least, the saying reflects the “Africanist Perspective” according to Humanities professor Dr. Neal Lester in an interview with NPR. See Joel Goldberg, “It Takes A Village To Determine The Origins Of An African Proverb,” last modified July 30, 2016. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/07/30/487925796/it-takes-a-village-to-determine-the-origins-of-an-african-proverb>.

larger framework; instead of apologetics being the task of several separate *individuals*, rather, it is the task of a community of interconnected *persons*. In order to explain the difference, *individuals* and *persons* will be differentiated.

Individualism, here, refers to the theory of a person as a self-contained entity, a project that attempts to reduce a person into what they are solely in themselves.⁵⁴ Most apologetic training emphasizes the *individual*, this self-contained entity. The unspoken goal of this training, thoroughly exaggerated, is often to become a type of omniscient conduit of perfect reason or persuasion for the faith; the perfect debater or communicator, so to speak. However, the individualism project is doomed to fail, at least according to the research in the previous chapter. A person is not a self-contained entity. There is no person without other persons. A *person* is both a social and narratival being that cannot be reduced to what is essentially “themselves.” What is a person without their relationships or memories with others? If these were suddenly forgotten, would you still be *you*? The obvious answer is the negative. There is no *individual*, a person outside of community or other persons. To use a trinitarian analogy, you cannot reduce the Holy Spirit to “itself” without the divine communion with the Father and the Son; heresy aside, the Holy Spirit would cease to be the Holy Spirit. So, too, with humans.

So what of all this, then? How does this relate to apologetics? In two ways: anthropologically, the person being witnessed to is full of social and narratival connections that must be taken into account, same as the apologist; pragmatically, the work of apologetics is most effectively done within community through collaboration. The individualism model neglects these insights, it essentially views the task of apologetics as done by separate individuals. In

⁵⁴ Individualism in this context is not to be confused with other uses of the word, such as uses that come up in discussions on individualism versus collectivism when comparing cultures, although those ideas are relevant here.

other words, it is as if there are several geese flying separately, only loosely connected by flying in the same sky and occasionally pairing up. A community-oriented model, which refines and reframes the former, views the task of apologetics as done by a community of several interconnected persons. The whole formation is based on community and collaboration, like geese. It may be appropriate, then, to speak of an “apologetic community,” which is essentially the Body of Christ, the Church. Everyone participates in this approach — regardless of education, (dis)ability, class, and so on — everyone is a witness to and defender of the faith in their own way. As there are many churches making up the Church, so are there many smaller apologetic communities. Many may find this distinction to be splitting hairs, a small and insignificant nuance, yet the consequences can be drastic. At the very least, the efficacy of the apologetic task is threatened. When the apologetic community is realized, the fruit of collaboration reaps many benefits. Like geese, the apologetic community can *go further together*.

The most obvious benefit of community is a plurality of approaches and strengths. The previous section on creativity noted how the apologist’s role can take a variety of forms, such as teacher, friend, or storyteller, and although not every apologist will be gifted in all of these areas, an apologetic community allows others to “fill in the gaps” or to cover each other’s weaknesses. Personally, I have met many Christians who shy away from apologetics due to feelings of inadequacy; mainly as a response to traditional apologetics, where a certain intelligence and/or education to reason for the faith seems like the primary task.⁵⁵ The same can likewise apply to

⁵⁵ Many adherents of traditional apologetics try to make resources accessible to those without the privilege of education or training, yet it is still focused on defense through intellectual reasoning. Disability theology poses a lethal critique to many un-nuanced forms of apologetics, where a “lack of” or difference in intelligence makes their role in defending the faith null.

E/N methods when communication skills are lacking. The separate *personalities* within the apologetic community is a strength, here, rather than a hindrance. The method(s) most persuasive for a person are far more likely to be covered in community; whereas an individual apologist leaves open many gaps. More so, as people are (re)introduced to the faith, they often require more than one encounter with people before being truly persuaded. An apologetic community is more likely to lead to multiple encounters.

Similarly, an apologetic community will also reach a wider and more diverse audience. Obviously a single individual cannot be everywhere, know everything, do everything, and be everything needed for every person, despite how often some try; a community, however, gets much closer to those goals. When fatigue sets in, others in the community can take over. There is no dependence upon a single leader or small group. The whole is bigger than the sum of its parts. An apologetic community can pool resources, knowledge, and connections to tackle bigger and more diverse projects than what individuals can usually do, which tends to result in a greater impact. Whether the “debris” keeping people from the faith is intellectual, physical, emotional, environmental, or so on, a community is more apt to respond to it. Unfortunately, stories of people feeling “left behind” from Christian communities are very common. If a “community” is simply a loose patchwork of individuals in close proximity, rather than a unified and collaborating community, they will likely be unable to recognize and respond to people’s needs in several instances. When each individual has *only* their own goals and mission, many will predictably fall behind without assistance.

Another downside of individualistic apologetic approaches is that frequently a particular strand of Christian theological tradition is put forward and defended, not simply the “essentials” of the faith. To be fair, an individual apologist can hardly circumvent this inclination, anyways.

This may lead some to believe that debatable matters are necessary to follow Christ, as many non-Christians (and Christians alike) are oblivious to the vast history and breadth of Christianity. This may be especially pronounced in traditions with a tight theological framework, where removal of one aspect leads the rest to fall apart, which is likely why particulars are especially defended in the first place. Yet, there are many who cannot accept certain practices or views of God, but would feel comfortable within a different tradition or theological strand; of course, they may never learn of that if they only converse with a single individual. An apologetic community can stymie the preoccupation with unessential doctrines and practices, specific traditions or denominations, and even individual leaders or thinkers so that people do not reject the whole instead of a part. Although some may see diversity of opinion as a negative, a diverse community can actually lead towards greater clarity and nearness to truth; perhaps even the humility and openness needed for genuine dialogue.

The significance of community-oriented apologetics is more than just an attestation to teamwork — even though the effects of collaboration should never be underestimated. Apologetics is the task of the Church, the Apologetic Community. The call to witness to and defend the faith is the call for all persons, and since we are created as social beings, we necessarily fulfill this call in community. To be human is to be in community, to have relations, and stories, and memories, and if our apologetic strategies fail to account for this, our efficacy will inevitably be reduced. Rather than solely relying upon individualistic methods, such as one-on-one conversations or an individual writing a persuasive book for the faith, a revised apologetic framework should incorporate those methods within a model of community and collaboration. This revised framework should challenge the focus on the singular; not only “What can I do?” but “What can we do?”; not only “What can we each do separately?” but

“What can we each do together?”. Individualistic apologetic approaches are vital, but they cannot supplant the ontology of the Church as the Apologetic Community.

Summary & Conclusion

If apologetic methods are necessarily affected by their anthropological assumptions (and an exploration of contemporary apologetic methods seems to suggest so), and if a person-as-desirer model proves the most accurate (and the current interdisciplinary research certainly serves as corroboration), then an effective and well-informed apologetic method will develop from the implications of such a model. Apart from many of the insights already discussed from soft E/N methodologies, three particular implications of the research are valuable for the development of an apologetic method: persuasion over argumentation, creativity over rigidity, and community over individuality. The conclusion of human persons as holistic suggests persuasion through multiple means for effectiveness in defending the faith. Creativity, as the art of persuasion, indicates the polyvalent role of the apologist. The task of defending the faith is not fulfilled by a few select individuals but is consummated through and practiced as the Apologetic Community. Although this chapter may be criticized for its focus on theory and method rather than more specific and “practical” guides or how-tos, it accurately portrays the essence of such a method. There is no one-size-fits all approach. Every person’s needs are different and require a unique strategy. Each community will need to work out in their time and place how to best respond to the call to defend the faith.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to derive insights on apologetic method from research on what it means to be human. I have sought to accomplish this in three steps. The first main chapter explored contemporary apologetic methods. Around fifteen unique approaches were found through comparing several taxonomies of apologetic methods. Although some were not considered for further consideration due the scope of this thesis, the rest were placed into three categories based on their similarities: Traditional Apologetics, Presuppositionalism, and Experiential/Narrative Apologetics. The approaches of each were analyzed and their underlying assumptions of humanity explored. These reflected James K.A. Smith's taxonomy of anthropological models and each correlated to a different primary apologetic aim: persons as *thinkers*, with the aim of demonstrating the rationality of the faith; persons as *believers*, with the aim of showing Christianity to be true; and persons as *desirers*, showing that one ought to commit their life to Christ.

The following chapter examined interdisciplinary anthropological research for comparison to the assumptions of each method. Theological anthropology — explored mainly through the early Genesis narratives, Christology, and Pauline literature — revealed intimations of the person-as-desirer model through the human condition, nature, purpose and mission, salvation, and *telos*, among others. The sciences corroborated similar claims. The sociological, psychological, and economical research thoroughly rejected a person-as-thinker model, and revealed humans as at least *believers*, if not *desirers*. However, any ambiguity was dismissed promptly due to the neuroscientific research that substantially supported a person-as-desirer model: humans are necessarily narrative, affective, embodied, and social creatures. Apart from

insights already gleaned from E/N methodologies, three implications of the research for apologetics were provided: (1) apologetics is (and should be) about more than simply logical and rational arguments, (2) apologetics should take a creative approach, and (3) apologetics is the task of the Church, not just individuals.

The implications from the previous chapter were rewritten in three dichotomies: persuasion over argumentation, creativity over rigidity, and community over individuality. Rather than focusing on only logical or rational arguments or evidences, the first section discussed nine unique modes of persuasion for defending the faith: (1) *logos*, persuasion by means of logic and coherency; (2) *ethos*, persuasion by means of character and authority; (3) *pathos*, persuasion by means of emotions and values; (4) *kairos*, persuasion by means of timing and appropriateness; (5) *mythos*, persuasion by means of narrative and testimony; (6) *topos*, persuasion by means of theme and relevance; (7) *tropos*, persuasion by means of way and manner; (8) *typos*, persuasion by means of imitation and embodiment; and (9) *theos*, persuasion by means of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The following section on creativity emphasized the eclectic nature of a well-informed apologetic method. The final section on community described the importance of collaboration in apologetics, the role of community in each person's life, and developed the idea of an Apologetic Community.

The arrival to an apologetic method such as this may seem foreign, if not foolish, to many, as it is very different than the concept of apologetics they have been handed. Perhaps this is the point all along: apologetics has become a branch that needs to be pruned, made less exclusive, individualistic, and overly cognitive, and more in line with how we were made and how we are. Although each apologetic method could filter Derek's story through their own lens and explanations, in my experience — not to mention from the research in this thesis — I find

this method is not only more effective in a pragmatic sense, but more in line with who people essentially are and the kind of work we are called to as Christians — the Apologetic Community.

A few future lines of inquiry come to mind. First, an examination of a wider scope of apologetic methodologies, such as historical or unpopular methods, may prove fruitful. Although this would not change the outcome of the interdisciplinary research, it may help further nuance the assumed anthropological models and track the history of development and shifts in methodology and/or anthropology. Second, since pentecostalism is my received and chosen tradition, this research could lead to further development and articulation of a distinctly pentecostal apologetic method, with a special emphasis on pneumatology that was noticeably absent in this paper. Lastly, little attention was given to a philosophy of language, which can not only reveal parts of our humanity, but also provide insight into methods of communication.¹

¹ Although omitted due to space restraints, I found the work of Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy especially valuable. His insight on language or speech as related to community, narrative, affections, embodiment, and logic reflects much of the heart of this work. Furthermore, his discussion of grammatical health and “diseases” of speech are timely for the current climate of apologetic dialogue today. See Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *The Origin of Speech* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1981), esp. 10–18, 38–72, 128–129.

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