

December 2022

The History of Apologetics: A Collaborative Article Review

Isaiah B. Parker

Liberty University, ibparker@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/elevol6iss2>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#), [History of Philosophy Commons](#), [History of Religion Commons](#), [Intellectual History Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Parker, Isaiah B.. 2022. "The History of Apologetics: A Collaborative Article Review." *Eleutheria* 6, (2). <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/elevol6iss2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Rawlings School of Divinity at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Eleutheria* by an authorized editor of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

The History of Apologetics: A Collaborative Article Review

Abstract

In *The History of Apologetics*, the authors examine a variety of noteworthy Western apologists throughout seven distinct historical eras: Patristic, Medieval, Early Modern, Nineteenth Century, Twentieth Century (American), Twentieth Century (European), and Contemporary. Each chapter presents four essential elements relating to the life and work of one apologist: historical background, theological context, apologetic methodology and response, and critical contribution(s) to apologetics. They aim to provide an overview of influential apologists within their unique cultural contexts. This review structures its content in the same manner, albeit with some necessary minor changes to the elements for ease of reading. The historical era is shown in bold, and each review is on one apologist in that particular era. These are presented in the same chronological order seen in the book.

Keywords

Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D Chatraw, Alister E. McGrath, Zondervan Academic

Cover Page Footnote

Edited by Isaiah B. Parker, MA in Christian Apologetics at Liberty University (2023) Contributors: Abigail Andrews Alaura Balsam Stone Clark Angela Crandall Joseph Dennis Peyton Gerner Shania Giese Evan Griffith Whitney Harris Devon Hine Samuel Johnson Elijah Justice Katherine Kessel Nathaniel O'Connor Michaela Victoria Prevett Gideon Riches Sarah Rinn Gavin Schade Jacob Silver Tyler Skywalker John Trimble Ernesto Jose Ugonana Santana Kurt Voggenreiter Kiara Wilson Abigail Wright

Forrest, Benjamin K., Joshua D. Chatraw, and Alister E. McGrath. *The History of Apologetics*. Zondervan Academic. 2020. 847 pages. ISBN: 978-0-310-55941-2

Author Introduction

Benjamin K. Forrest has an Ed.D. from Liberty University and is Professor of Christian Education and Associate Dean at Liberty University. He is the co-author of *Surviving and Thriving in Seminary* and the coeditor of the two-volume *Legacy of Preaching* set. His research focuses on spiritual formation, family ministry, and historical examples of leadership.

Joshua D. Chatraw has a Ph.D. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He serves as the Theologian-in-Residence at Holy Trinity Anglican Church and the Executive Director of the Center for Public Christianity. Raleigh, North Carolina. He is the co-author of *Apologetics at the Cross* and the author of *Telling a Better Story*. His research focuses on public theology, apologetics, and culture.

Alister E. McGrath has a D.Phil., D.D., and D.Litt. from the University of Oxford and holds the Chair in Science and Religion at Oxford. He is a historian, biochemist, and Christian theologian who has authored numerous books on theology and apologetics, including *Christianity's Dangerous Idea* and *Mere Apologetics*. His research focuses on natural theology, atheism, and apologetics.

Summary

In *The History of Apologetics*, the authors examine a variety of noteworthy Western apologists throughout seven distinct historical eras: Patristic, Medieval, Early Modern, Nineteenth Century, Twentieth Century (American), Twentieth Century (European), and Contemporary. Each chapter presents four essential elements relating to the life and work of one apologist: historical background, theological context, apologetic methodology and response, and critical contribution(s) to apologetics. They aim to provide an overview of influential apologists within their unique cultural contexts. This review structures its content in the same manner, albeit with some necessary minor changes to the elements for ease of reading. The historical era is shown in bold, and each review is on one apologist in that particular era. These are presented in the same chronological order seen in the book.

Patristic Apologists

Justin Martyr: Prophetic Revelation as the True Philosophy

Historical Background: Born around 100 A.D., Justin Martyr received a Greek education, which made him very interested in Greek philosophy. His interest in philosophy eventually led him to convert to Christianity and become one of the earliest post-Biblical apologists. After converting to Christianity, Justin Martyr pioneered Christian apologetics, writing First Apology, Second Apology, and Dialogue with Trypho.

Theological Context: Justin Martyr was surrounded by Greek philosophy and Roman religion. In seeking the truth through philosophy, he encountered the Hebrew prophets. He found these biblical figures to provide better answers for reality than the pagan philosophers and began to argue against the paganism of his day.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Justin Martyr had a two-edge approach, addressing both the Gentiles and the Jews equally. He often employed Greek philosophy in his apologetics. Justin spoke out against Christianity's persecution by writing about Christianity's virtues while arguing that accusations against Christianity were unfounded. He was primarily writing to Antonius Pius and the Roman senate. Justin showed the uniqueness of Christianity by comparing Christian religious practices with pagan religious practices. Additionally, he defended Christianity from people claiming that Christianity borrowed ideas from paganism. Justin Martyr's main apologetic was based on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, especially in light of the cross.

Contribution to the Field of Apologetics: In his defense of the faith, Justin Martyr made a serious effort to understand his opponents and delineated philosophical arguments from Scriptural arguments.

Irenaeus of Lyons: Anti-Gnostic Polemicist

Historical Background: Born circa 130 A.D. in Smyrna, Irenaeus became a disciple of Polycarp at a young age. Throughout his life, he defended the faith from many early heresies.

Theological Context: Irenaeus often defended Christianity against Gnosticism, a group of heresies that blended pagan philosophy, Hellenistic Judaism, and Christian thought.

Apologetic Methodology and Response: Irenaeus outlined the core orthodox Christian doctrines handed down from the Apostles and defended them against Gnosticism. Irenaeus based his argumentation on epistemic humility, which the Gnostics often lacked, arguing that the unity of special revelation given by God is superior to the disunity of Gnostic thought. Irenaeus utilized rhetorical arguments, instead of philosophical arguments, with three key terms especially: hypothesis, economy, and recapitulation. Hypothesis is the presentation of a plot structure intended by an author. Economy is the arrangement, purpose, and direction of the plot. Recapitulation is the concluding summary of the Bible – the work of Christ. Regarding other apologetic strategies, Irenaeus showed how the Gnostics are inconsistent by addressing how gnostic beliefs evolved, pointing out various dilemmas, finding the sources of gnostic errors, and attacking gnostic morality.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Irenaeus's apologetics played a crucial role in navigating the church through the second century. Christians should make use of some of his methods to reach non-believers today.

Athenagoras of Athens: Greek Philosophy as Arbiter of Christian Beliefs

Historical Context: Athenagoras was born circa A.D. 133 in Athens. At this time, Athens was the preeminent city of philosophy. Athenagoras was well-versed in his day's philosophy and contemporary thought, much of which held Christian thought in low regard. He appears to have converted to Christianity after reading Christian writings that he originally read to contest their teachings.

Theological Context: During the time of Athenagoras, many pagan philosophers combatted Christian beliefs and made false accusations in their writings of cultural antagonism. This led Athenagoras to respond to culture by employing

their ideals, appealing to their minds as philosophers, and becoming a part of the first age of apologists.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Some of the claims made against Christianity at this time, such as incest and cannibalism, were refuted by Athenagoras. He further informed the emperor about these misconceptions of Christianity, acknowledging that every person, including Christians, was under the same civic order. He highlighted the similarities in theological thought between pagans and Christians.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Athenagoras was known for appealing to the Romans through their cultural norms and allegiance to their political system without denying his faith. Engaging and understanding culture is a crucial aspect of apologetics, and Athenagoras exemplifies that truth possesses the power of persuasion in his apologetic writings. Appealing to culture can even be the means of supporting the truth of Christianity through “common grace.”

Tertullian of Carthage: African Apologetics Enters the Fray

Historical Background: Tertullian was born ca. 160 A.D. He was an African Church Father who resided in Carthage and was known for his intellect and narrow-mindedness.

Theological Context: We can understand Tertullian as an apologist because his writings were generally aimed at an opponent in which he would write about controversial theologies. The three following groups were his primary ‘opponents.’ The pagans followed the old religion of the Roman gods. The heretics, often Gnostic groups, did not believe Jesus was the incarnate Son of God but rather that he was a teacher of secret mysteries. The Jews, who followed rabbinic thought that rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Tertullian is called a ‘controversialist’ because his apologetic approach often involved a defense of his faith and an attack on his opponents, criticizing their lifestyle and morals. Tertullian's spiritual temperament often gave him a reputation that assumed he divorced philosophy and theology. His works often combine reason and faith; however, his temperament upheld the view that he was cold-hearted.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Tertullian's apologetic approach can be summarized this way: be bold, emphasize morality, use human reason as much as possible, and proclaim Christ in the Word.

Origen: An Innovator in Apologetic Sophistication

Historical Background: Origen was born ca. 185 A.D. in Alexandria. He is credited as the originator of multiple scholarly accomplishments within the history of Christianity. It was reported that he spent his free time teaching and reading the Scriptures.

Theological Context: Origen's thoughts benefitted from a Platonic system, which was also influential on his theological work

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Origen's primary piece of writing in apologetics is *Against Celsus*, where he dialogues with the pagan philosopher Celsus. Origen's writing utilized the integration between the Platonic and Stoic traditions when answering the points presented against Christianity. In Origen's work, many types of content and methods are discussed and can help shape the efforts of apologists in the present time.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Origen was one of the most thorough early Christian integrationists. He understood that integration was central to the church's mission to be culturally influential in the world.

Athanasius of Alexandria: The Logos as Reason to Believe

Historical Background: Athanasius was born during a time of change (ca. 295), not only for the church but also for the Roman Empire. The Diocletian persecution at the beginning of the fourth century and Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity significantly impacted his life.

Theological Context: Athanasius is best known for his defense against Arianism, named after the presbyter Arius. Arius argued that the Son of God was a created being who was divine but not as divine as the Father, whereas Athanasius opposed and defended the full divinity of the Son of God.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Athanasius is well known for being a polemicist and dogmatic theologian, but he has received less attention for his pastoral and apologetic work. In his apologetic works, he addressed many issues, including the superiority of Christianity over paganism, Christianity as superior in explaining creation, Christianity as excellent in answering the problem of evil, Christianity as superior to idolatry, the superiority of God's saving activity, the superiority of the cross of Christ, and the superiority of Christ's resurrection.

Athanasius also offered a refutation against the Jews and the Greeks. For the Jews, Athanasius used the Hebrew scriptures to explain Jesus and what he accomplished. For the Greeks, Athanasius answered their questions regarding why the Logos would appear in such a humble way. Athanasius used the Scriptures and testimonies of believers to show the rationality and superiority of Christianity. While simultaneously using these pieces as an invitation to embrace a faith in Christ.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Athanasius showed that the primary purpose of an apologist is to equip the faithful and engage the faithless. He showed the value of carefully interacting with the fundamental beliefs of those who oppose Christianity and presenting Christian beliefs as superior.

Augustine of Hippo: Apologist of Faith and Reason Seeking

Historical Background: Augustine (ca. 354-430) was born to a Roman pagan father and Christian mother in North Africa. As he grew up, he developed into a skilled rhetorician. He was inspired to love wisdom by the Roman thinker Cicero and studied many different subjects. He became a Manichean but eventually converted to Christianity.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Augustine debated against the popular idea that one cannot know anything with certainty. In addition, he argued how faith is necessary for everyone's life, whether you are a religious believer or an unbeliever. He defended a God who is transcendent in certain respects and knowable, describable, and involved in the world. Augustine's most impactful addition to theology is his explanation of the Trinity. Augustine wrote two of the most influential books in all of Christian apologetics. These two books are *Confessions* which expressed themes such as sin, faith and reason, the nature of time and eternity, etc., and *The City of God*, which discussed responses to significant objections to the Christian faith and the responsibilities of human beings living in the world. Augustine extensively explored God's goodness as a defeater of the existence of evil. He argued that while God made everything good, everything outside Himself is changeable and corruptible.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Augustine significantly impacted Western Christianity and modern apologetics. His works still influence individuals today by inspiring them to follow Christ in His glorious invitation.

Medieval Apologists

John of Damascus: Preparing Christians for the Coming Age of Islam

Historical Background: John was born into a unique period of history where Damascus was overtaken by Arab armies and introduced to the Arab religion of Islam. John's position as a Christian and chief tax collector under the Arabian government allowed him sufficient exposure to Islam and its arguments against Christianity.

Theological Context: John followed a Melkite and orthodox tradition and was loyal to the Byzantine authority. John's apologetic approach focuses on defending Christianity against Muslim practices.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: John's goal was to equip Christians with a better comprehension of Islam and strong Christian arguments. In the dialogue *Disputation Between a Christian and a Saracen*, John wrote intending to present Christians with the theological questions that local Muslims were addressing and to encourage believers not to submit to their religious demands. In his apologetic approach, John focused on showing his audience that the Qur'an and the Scriptures are incompatible. He also emphasized his three-step apologetic approach; understand, defend, and refute. Understand: This step of John's apologetic method is centered around understanding what Muslims believe, especially in contrast to the Bible. For example, Islam taught that Jesus was not divine and was a created servant of the Lord. Defend, the second step of the method, equipped believers with responses to the contradictions, questions, or objections that Muslims presented to Christianity. In the defense, John encouraged individuals to ask Muslims questions that would reveal the fragility of some of their foundational beliefs. Refute, the final step of John's apologetic, focuses on refuting Muslim accusations and displaying the logic of Christian beliefs. John uses logic, common sense, and Scripture to defend Christianity.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: In addition to providing Christians with tools to defend their faith against Islam, John also produced a summary of major doctrines of the Christian church that further helped believers understand what they believed.

Theodore Abu Qurrah: Defending Christian Doctrines during the Rise of Islam

Historical Background: Theodore was born in northern Syria in the second half of the eighth century. He served as a bishop in the city of Harran, where Arabic was beginning to be commonly spoken, significantly contributing to his writings later.

Theological Context: During this time, Islam and its culture that followed began to gain prominence where Christianity was once popular. The use of Arabic as a common language was also beginning to gain traction, excluding Jews and Christians from both social and religious aspects of culture. Theodore is primarily identified by two main works translated in the twentieth century. One of them is a collection of ten of his Treatises covering the Muslim criticisms of Christianity. The other is a single treatise titled “The Treatise on the Existence of the Creator and of the True Religion.”

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Theodore wrote a series of apologetic defenses for Christianity, defending Christianity’s exclusivity and developing a defense of what the true religion is amid religious diversity. He believed that different religious beliefs could be rationally adjudicated so one would eventually arrive at certainty regarding which religious positions are true.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Theodore’s most significant contribution to apologetics and the Christian world was his ability to bridge the gap between Muslim and Christian doctrines without compromising the timeless truth of Christianity while also finding familiarity in Islam.

Timothy I of Baghdad: A Model for Peaceful Dialogue

Historical Background: Timothy of Baghdad (ca. 727) was born into a wealthy family and was well-versed in Syriac, Greek, theology, philosophy, and medicine from a young age. He later learned Persian and became well-read in Aristotle. He proved to be a capable leader in the Church of the East. Eventually, Timothy was appointed as the bishop of Baghdad, maintaining sound orthodoxy within his community and interacting with the new ruling Muslims.

Theological Context: While sometimes accused of Nestorianism, the Church of the East should not be categorized as such. During Timothy’s life, the Church of the East was separated from other Syrian churches following the Council of Chalcedon. Though this was primarily due to political, not theological,

differences. Timothy led the church in Baghdad while it was the seat of power for the Muslim Abbasid dynasty. It is in the context of cross-religious dialogue and interaction with Islam that he formed his apologetic.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Timothy offers an apologetic responding to Islam in *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*. In this series of responses, Timothy speaks kindly of the Caliph and answers many common questions and objections raised by Muslims. He defended the incarnation, the Trinity, the death of Christ, and the lack of evidence for Muhammad in the Bible. Timothy used an apologetic that rested on the witness of Scripture and the historic Christian faith to respond to theological objections. His methodology was bold and unwavering. He was a cultural insider who understood his opponents and his faith. Timothy used his knowledge to emphasize common beliefs to build bridges between Muslims and Christians in order to point to the Gospel.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Timothy is a role model for Christians speaking in a different religious context than their own. He maintained a bold declaration of the Gospel while respecting the beliefs of his opponents. His example should encourage Christians to understand others' religious beliefs and have meaningful conversations about Jesus.

Anselm of Canterbury: Apologetics and the Ratio Fidei

Historical Background: Anselm was born in Italy in 1033. He grew up moving from monastery to monastery until he was accepted at the Benedictine monastery at Bec in France. He would advance quickly through the ranks at Bec and be elected as an archbishop. He would do his best to get out of this position but would eventually accept the promotion in 1093.

Theological Context: Anselm's focus would be on the doctrine of the Trinity and substitutionary atonement. His final work would cover the compatibility between human free will with God's divine foreknowledge, His grace, and predestination.

Apologetic Methodology: Anselm thought faith guided by rational investigation was the best way to reach a sound theological understanding. Two fundamental elements of Anselm's dialectic are the laws of logic and the search for middle terms in syllogisms. Regarding the laws of logic, you cannot have a statement be true and false at the same time or in the same sense. Otherwise, it is a contradiction to itself, and it is not true. Thus, for Anselm, Christian faith must be logically consistent. Regarding the search for the middle term, an argument form

that is made so that the first statement and the middle statement are true, making it so that the end statement has to be true; if one statement is false, then all of them might be false. For Anselm, the Christian faith must be bound by “necessary reasons.”

Apologetic Response: Anselm’s methodology is often defined as rational faith seeking understanding. For Anselm, God created this universe with order, exhibiting laws and morals. Therefore, when explaining that God is everywhere at once, he sees God operating everywhere. Anselm put forth a cosmological argument for God’s existence in his *Monologion*. Following Aristotle’s thought, four things could be the cause of X: the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause. Anselm argues that wherever the conclusion comes from, we must take note of the “Platonic Form” of “the Good” because God is good, and everything good comes from God. He further made his famous ontological argument in *Proslogion and Reply*. Essentially, the ontological argument follows modal logic, stating that the best way to tell what is possible is by what is actual. Anselm argues that if God is a necessary being, then he must be an actual being. Anselm wanted to defend the God he believed in; he thought that he could come to a full understanding of God and once that happened, then he would know how God exists. God must reveal and name himself.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Anselm contributed the “perfect being theology,” this being’s name cannot even be thought of because He is so perfect; he had to give it to us.

Saint Thomas Aquinas: Defending Reason and Faith

Historical Background: Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) was a Dominican priest who incorporated Aristotelian/Platonic ideals within his conception of Christian Theism.

Theological Context: Aquinas was in a theological environment of academic rediscovery. The philosophy of Aristotle had resurfaced and was the source of much controversy. For his part, Aquinas largely embraced Aristotelian thought and found it helpful in attaining truth.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Aquinas believed that the Christian faith could give a greater understanding of what the people could know about God apart from what He reveals about Himself. This is heavily influenced by his regard for natural theology and how God reveals Himself through His creation. Methodologically, Aquinas used creation as the best defense for the Christian

faith. His approach to apologetics would be that he thought of “observable realities within our experience and then proceed to establish their cause.” He attempted to demonstrate God’s existence by utilizing an *a posteriori* argumentation to show causal structure. Aquinas referred to God as the “first” cause, to Aquinas God is the only being without an intentional beginning. Aquinas believed that we could only think about God in the way we understand our own qualities. Aquinas thought that we come to believe specific things about God (i.e., God is one) through special revelation.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: The impact of Aquinas cannot be understated. Thomism, and Thomistic approaches, have influenced a variety of thinkers and books. Not the least of these is C. S. Lewis’s writings on natural law. Many contemporary apologists use Thomistic principles and arguments to support the rationality of the Christian faith.

Ramon Lull: Apologetics as the Art of Arts

Historical Background: Ramon Lull (ca. 1232) was born in Majorca a time and place that was influenced by many cultures, not the least of which was Islam. He spent much of his life traveling, writing, and preaching with the goal of converting Muslims and Jews. Lull was widely read and wrote at least 265 works, including an autobiography.

Theological Context: Lull grew up in a cosmopolitan city with international influences. He was constantly dialoguing with Muslims and Jews. There was a resurgence of western intellectual and cultural tradition, which many Muslims helped preserve. Lull believed that in order to convert Muslims and Jews he needed to show that Christianity could be rationally demonstrated as true. It was through a rational apologetic that he set out to further the conversation.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Lull thought that the best way to convert Muslims and Jews was to provide positive arguments for Christianity. He developed an approach he called his *Art*. This approach was meant to be an all-encompassing framework that shows how knowledge and being points to God and truth. The *Art* was a sort of logic used to determine truth and ultimately revelation of God. Lull hoped that his approach would help unbelievers see the truth of Christianity through all forms of knowledge.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Lull was against the forced conversion of conquered peoples. He had a strong desire that unbelievers would become Christians on their own volition. His attempts to find a method that finds common

knowledge pointing unbelievers to God is admirable and worthy of continued consideration for apologists today.

Gregory Palamas: Defending the Authority and Evidential Value of Religious Experience in Eastern Orthodoxy

Historical Background: Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296-1357) was a monk in northeastern Greece who was forced to move often due to invasions. He eventually became a priest and wrote about monastic life, “emphasizing the need for unceasing prayer as a means to union with God.”

Theological Context: During his lifetime, there were talks to reunify the Eastern and Western Churches. Barlaam of Seminara: Can One Prove Truth About God? Barlaam wanted to reunify the two Churches. He also doubted that Aristotelian logic could help people understand God’s divine nature because God is unknowable in full.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: One can prove truths about God, but these proofs presuppose experiential knowledge of God. We can know God through the Holy Scriptures and come to know Him more fully through personal experiences such as self-denial and prayer. Gregory argued for the authority of religious experience. He believed we can become part of the divine nature through constant prayer. When our mind becomes illuminated, our bodies are as well because the mind and body are one. This caused controversy with a man named Barlaam who criticized Gregory’s argument from religious experience. Barlaam claimed that God does not have a body, so you cannot have a bodily experience with God. When monks claimed to see God, it was either perceived, natural, or an angel. Gregory defended his argument by saying that God cannot be fully comprehended, but we can experience Him. He is alive, so He must interact. Eventually, Gregory’s position was affirmed and he was appointed as metropolitan of Thessaloniki. His position was affirmed at a synod that convened in 1351.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: He rejected Aristotelian logic and said faith was the sole basis for knowing anything about God’s nature. God is the author of our transformation

Early Modern Apologists

Hugo Grotius: Reason, Evidence, and Unity as the Means of Apologetics

Historical Background: Hugo Grotius was born in 1583 in Holland. He was a young prodigy of law and wrote extensively on the nature of law, rights, and justice. He lived in a theologically tumultuous post-Reformation age where many long-held assumptions were being challenged. He brought an irenic spirit to his writings in an attempt to create unity in a time of division.

Theological Context: There were many intense theological debates occurring during Grotius' life. Calvinism and Arminianism were locked in a conflict over the nature of grace, election, and freewill. Grotius wrote in defense of the Remonstrants (pro-Arminian). He did not believe they were heretics and argued for peace and unity in the church. Hugo believed the church should not indiscriminately take sides but should tolerate a variety of views.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Grotius defended the faith internally by dealing with theological issues and externally by arguing that Christianity is preferred against other religions. The unique time he lived in led him to take other religions seriously. He wrote *De Veritate* as an apologetic that promoted unity and appealed to historical evidence that demonstrated the truth of Christianity. He addressed paganism, Judaism, Islam, and ends with an argument defending the divinity of Jesus. Grotius believed it is freewill, guided by right reason, that would lead to unity and right belief.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Like an ancient *Mere Christianity*, he pursued only the most basic tenets of Christianity, truths that can be attained by reason, and then compared them to the flawed beliefs of rival beliefs. In this, the modern apologist can aspire to provide an accessible defense of Christianity. However, there is a warning here. Grotius may have been so concerned with unity that he missed the necessary essential Christian doctrines that provide the Christian framework.

Blaise Pascal: Wagering the Truthfulness of Christianity

Historical Background: Pascal (ca. 1623) lived in the wake of the 17th Century Enlightenment during the revolt of the French government against the Holy

Roman Empire. He experienced a nontraditional education from his father and suffered from poor health for most of his childhood.

Theological Context: Pascal made many scientific discoveries and strived to reform the Jansenist Sect of Catholicism which followed Aristotelian thought in doctrine.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: One of his most famous arguments, Pascal's Wager, states that apart from any evidence, one has everything to gain and nearly nothing to lose by believing in God. Ultimately, one will encounter the first principles through the heart and can assent to a knowledge of God. This relied on Decision Theory; a process to rationalize competing actions in conditions of uncertainty or risk. This commits the merit of one's decision to subjective probability with the highest utility. Pascal's Wager boils down to this, if you win, you win everything. If you lose, you lose nothing. The best greatest reality with the highest utility is theism.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Per Pascal's Wager, it is more reasonable to affirm a proposition that is potentially knowable (theism is true) than to affirm a proposition that isn't knowable (atheism is true).

Jonathan Edwards: Dogmatics as Apologetics

Historical Background: Edwards was a Puritan minister in New England and leader during Northampton's Awakening of 1734, the forerunner of the Great Awakening that would impact all 13 colonies.

Theological Context: God had gradually faded from the public conscience in the 1700s, and many things once attributed to God were no longer tenable.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Edwards's Apology can be broken down into three parts. First, the External Argument stated that naturalism would not provide a way of knowing if there was one God, or many gods, or how personal the reality of creation is. Second, the Internal Argument showed that one's faith can be seen as evidence for God since it is a form of seeing for oneself and not a secondhand belief that transcends ordinary rational argumentation for God's existence. Finally, in the Implicit Argument, Edward redirected methods of thought back to the theological truth of God by absorbing and adapting skeptical notions into the Christian thought process.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Edward's work provided a new argumentative strategy through the view that "the best apologetics is a good dogmatics." Unfortunately, his views were overshadowed by New England Theology for many years.

William Paley: Apologetics of Design and for Culture

Historical Background: William Paley was a Christian apologist, philosopher, essayist, and Anglican priest in the late 18th Century. He was an intelligent and disciplined man but was also viewed as outgoing, inviting, and pleasant by others.

Theological Context: William Paley agreed with the Cambridge Platonists that there is substantial evidence for the existence of God in his general revelation to mankind. He believed that God's general revelation would be apparent to any logical mind.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Paley's works included strong arguments for the design of our world, including the "Watchmaker" argument, teleological appeals, and the problem of evil as a violation of the original created order. Additionally, Paley was a proponent of social justice in his day, as he strongly opposed slavery and cared for the poor. Arguments from Design. Social Apologetics and Cultural Engagement.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Paley was an expert at communicating the binding of science and theology together as he refuted naturalism and upheld natural theology. Paley's most famous work is his publication of Natural Theology.

Joseph Butler: Defending the Probability of Christianity against Deism

Historical Background: Joseph Butler was a scholarly apologist in the early 18th century in England that opposed deism with theistic evidence. He wrote several publications, preached, and held high positions in the royal family.

Theological Context: Deism is the belief that there is a God who is the creator of the universe, but he is not the God described and revealed in the Bible. Many deists were actually professing Christians who saw themselves as reformers.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Butler argues for a theistic worldview through the premise that “what is likely to happen is something that is like what we have observed before.” He argued that the revelations of natural theology in the context of the Bible are probable and have great significance. Butler lays out important arguments against deism by offering reasons to believe there is life after death, that moral reasoning can only come from God, that trials refine us as humans, and the defense of God’s revelation. Probability. Analogical Reasoning.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Butler’s contributions to apologetics include structured arguments against the grounds of deism and a strong appeal that the cost of not considering the truth of Christianity is too high, known as Butler’s Wager.

Nineteenth-Century Apologists

Simon Greenleaf: A Defense That Never Rested

Historical Background: Simon Greenleaf (b. 1783) was born in Massachusetts, and is one of the foundational faculty of Harvard Law School. He is considered the father of legal apologetics and is a highly influential legal figure, with many still referencing his works. He wrote on law, theology, human rights, and apologetics.

Theological Context: Greenleaf saw value in using his legal vocation to defend Christianity. In an increasingly secular society, he thought that one’s Christian faith should be integrated with one’s vocation. He put this into practice with his defense of Christ’s unjust execution.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Greenleaf held that lawyers are especially committed to the use and examination of evidence in evaluating the world. He did not believe that Jesus could be a mere moral teacher. Jesus either was the Messiah, or he was a liar. Greenleaf believed that Christianity was based on evidential facts that could be examined and verified. The most important of these was the disciples’ witness and the reliability of the New Testament documents. His legal and historical principles still hold up to modern scrutiny and vindicate the apostolic witness.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Greenleaf continued and contributed to the long tradition of legal defenders of Christianity. His Christocentric apologetic

building on the reliability of the Gospel and the resurrection is one that apologists should continue to explore and use. Greenleaf's modest appeal to reasonable certainty should be the standard for modern apologetics.

John Henry Newman

Historical Background: Newman (ca. 1801-1890) was an ardent apologist who fought theological liberalism, which is when people say they are Christian but deny the Bible and Christian doctrine and conforms it to the present culture.

Theological Context: Newman was theologically influenced by many people, from Reverend Walter Mayers, under whom he was converted to Christianity. Others include Hurrell Froude, John Keble, John Wesley, and George Whitefield. The theological teachings that occupied Newman were man's sinfulness, the necessity of genuine conversion, and the reality of Christ's atonement. These realities would manifest at the "awakening of one's feelings" in response to the preached word of God.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Newman sought to explain and clarify the connection between faith and reason. He combated theological liberalism by educating on church fathers and tradition. In response to an anti-supernaturalist persuasion, Newman held to the objective reality of apostolic succession: "A Christian can't be saved only because they feel the Lord's presence...they must also stand in the church's tradition." Newman adopted four distinct methodologies in defending the traditionalism of the church. These four methodologies are theological, homiletical, philosophical, and educational. The theological was the need for the church to follow doctrinal formulas. The homiletical showed that the Spirit works through faith and obedience to move one through "Ordinary Moral Respectability." Faithful daily obedience is the essence of religion. The philosophical relates faith and reason by the proportion that faith is a form of reason. Newman sees "faith as waiting to be placed in the service of something beyond itself." One can not have faith in the lack of an object. The educational posited that knowledge can unite reason and faith in dialogue and harmony. Knowledge discovers truth. So education and religion must always go hand in hand.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Newman's contribution to apologetics was formed around the four methodologies that rebut theological liberalism. "Newman was determined and consistent throughout his career, both as Anglican

and Catholic, in seizing opportunities to vigorously criticize theological liberalism.”

Soren Kierkegaard

Historical Background - Born in Denmark (ca. 1813-1855), Soren writes on what it means to be a Christian and the identity of the follower. He argues that church leaders are trading the treasure of Christ for the follies of human reason.

Theological Context: The revelation necessary for believing Jesus as the son of God creates room for faith because the assurance of the possibility is insufficient to determine Jesus' existence. Trust is established by historical evidence or reports, whereas philosophical truth is established in relation to the “eternal truth.” For Kierkegaard, faith (not simply intellectual assent) is essential since reason cannot mediate the truths found through faith.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Kierkegaard held that humans and God are infinitely qualitatively different. Hence our ontological difference from God and relational separation from God is demonstrated by our Infinite Qualitative Difference. Infinite Qualitative Difference relates to the limit within humanity's ability to reason about a God who is infinitely qualitatively different from finite humans. Therefore, human reason is insufficient to obtain knowledge of our condition and therefore remedy it. The best objective truth we enjoy through human reason apart from faith is an approximation; however, where one's eternal fate lies, an approximation is not good enough. Faith is required where intellect cannot lend mere assent. Knowledge of God is found in Christ, “God cannot be an object for man, since God is the subject.” He takes on human form as an object of knowledge but remains hidden in human flesh. God becoming man creates the “absolute paradox” of the Christian faith. The most profound incognito is God in human form.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Kierkegaard offers a rational defense for the limits of Christian knowledge. He defends the faith required by the God of Abraham, the faith of Christ, “Faith is not a consolation; faith is a prize.”

James Orr: Defender of the Christian Worldview

Historical Background: Born in Glasgow, Scotland, James Orr (b. 1844) was orphaned at a young age. He studied at the University of Glasgow and eventually became a Presbyterian minister. He spent the last thirteen years of his life as a professor of apologetics and dogmatics at Trinity College of Glasgow.

Theological Context: Orr saw the growing deism and liberalism around him. The rise of anti-supernaturalists and rationalists led to a degradation of traditional Christian beliefs. In this environment, Orr fought for orthodoxy. He used Christology as the central focus of his theological system. Ultimately, it was his concern for the common man that led him to give a defense of the Christian faith.

Apologetic Methodology and Response: Orr could be considered a tempered evidentialist. He saw Christianity as a comprehensive system that best explained reality and sought to defend this system. He did this with evidence and by appealing to the coherency of the Christian system. Orr thought that one cannot stay a mere theist, reflection required seeking the true God. This God could be found in divine revelation, which would force one to contend with the person of Jesus. Orr saw the resurrection as uniquely secure within Christianity and defended it against many different views of his day. While not an inerrantist, he defended the historical resurrection of Jesus. He further argued that even if there are discrepancies in the Gospels, they do nothing to discredit the Gospel narrative.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Orr contributed much to general concepts in Christianity. The idea of worldviews was a totally new way of thinking in Orr's day. He also emphasized Christianity as a unitive system, it should cohere with all forms of truth. This included accepting what seemed true in science as long as it did not contradict orthodoxy. Ultimately, Orr saw theology and apologetics as needed within the Christian community and he never lost sight of his responsibility to care for believers.

B. B. Warfield: The Lion of Princeton

Historical Background: Warfield (ca. 1851) was highly educated and held pastorships in the Presbyterian Church and professorships, including Professor of systematic theology at Princeton. He wrote many published works, equaling that of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Barth.

Theological Context: Warfield's writings included works on textual criticism of the New Testament, controversies of liberalism in the Presbyterian Church, Christological controversies, and rebuttals of non-reformed theological systems such as the Great Awakening and Pentecostal theology.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Apologetics to Warfield served as a way not to play defense but to go on offense and Christianize the world. Much of his apologetic work focused on the trustworthiness of Scripture and a defense of the Resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, he pushed back against experiential apologetics. Warfield asserts that God reveals Himself in nature, but the primary way He shows Himself is through Scripture.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Warfield's main contributions included rebuttals against liberalism in the Church, a defense of Scripture, and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Twentieth-Century American Apologists

J. Gresham Machen: Saving Christianity from Christians

Historical Background: J. Gresham Machen (b. 1881) was born in Baltimore to a wealthy and influential family. He became a minister in the Presbyterian church and went on to be a professor at Princeton University. He wrote a popular book about the modernist-fundamentalist controversy that was occupying the mind of the church. In the book, he tried to show in an even-handed discussion that Christianity and liberal Protestantism are two different religions. Machen was an avid defender of historic Christian orthodoxy within the church, the university, and the USA.

Theological Context: Machen taught at Princeton as one of the last proponents of Princeton Theology. Princeton was a bastion of Reformed orthodoxy in the USA. They were able to do this for 125 years due to their firm holding of the Westminster Confession. Machen held, amongst a changing theological culture, to the old orthodox traditions. Holding that faith begins with the Spirit and reasoned arguments for the truth of Christianity are good for the edification of believers. He used apologetics primarily as a way to help Christians in their faith and in the raising of their children.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Machen believed that liberalism fundamentally saw essential Christian doctrines differently than orthodoxy. He thought that Liberalism was a program for a virtuous life with vague associations with a spiritual realm. Regarding faith, Machen believed it could never be blind because it was integrally connected with one's understanding. True faith depended on correct knowledge of those truths to which Christians entrusted their eternal destiny. A stalwart defender of orthodox Protestantism, Machen did not want to defend a mere Christianity. Instead, he defended what he saw to be the great historic tradition of the church and focused primarily on the witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Regarding education, Machen believed it should not be focused on teaching children how to think, but rather to show and teach objective and permanent truth; primarily, that which God has revealed. Argument alone was insufficient for understanding truth, however, apologetics was imminently important to combat the spirit of the age. Apologetics was a means to a right understanding of Christianity. This meant that philosophy was very useful and should be explored and used by Christians.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Machen wanted people to pay attention if only for the reason that Christianity stood against the materialistic paternalism of his day. Interestingly, he thought the church had become too invested in Progressive politics. Apologists should take note of Machen's exhortation for the church to reject political activism, and instead focus on bringing people's souls to God.

Cornelius Van Til: Presuppositional Apologist

Historical Background: Influenced by Reformed theologians like B. B. Warfield, Van Til (ca. 1895) wrote about apologetics and Barthianism, arguing that Barth's theology was the opposite of orthodox theology. Van Til was concerned with the purity of the Gospel.

Theological Context: Because Van Til was reformed, he desired to devise an apologetic method that aligned with his Reformed theology. He was not satisfied with the methods he learned at Princeton because they were not based on the Reformed tradition.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Studying two Reformed contemporaries, Abraham Kuyper and B. B. Warfield, Van Til concludes that Christianity is indeed defensible using apologetics, but unbelievers can understand the Gospel only naturally and not spiritually. Following Calvin, Van Til asserts that since all

men are created in the Image of God, all have a knowledge of Him, but those who refuse to follow Him suppress the knowledge of Him. We must approach these people by showing them the things from their worldview, which they take from the Christian worldview.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: His apologetic method was thoroughly Reformed and in direct defense of Christianity by pointing to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Gordon Haddon Clark: Logic and Scripture in a Presuppositional Apologetic

Historical Background: Gordon H. Clark (b. 1902) was born to Scottish immigrants who were deeply committed Presbyterian parents. He was well-prepared in Christian education and attended the University of Pennsylvania. His rigorous Christian philosophy and love for logic shaped a generation of evangelicals and brought about the rise of neo-evangelicalism.

Theological Context: Clark held an influential role in countering the rise of theological modernism in America. Three controversies played an important role in this controversial moment. First, his Calvinist theology and use of logic against popular dispensational millennialism led to Clark resigning his position at Wheaton. Second, a denominational dispute over influence led Clark through a long and controversial ordination process. Finally, his epistemological position that apologists could appeal to human reason in defense of the faith was challenged by Cornelius Van Til. Clark held that God is not entirely incomprehensible to human reason.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Clark believed that there was common ground between the believer and unbeliever in the realm of logic. Logic can be accessed by all because humanity is made in the image of God. While Clark held to a presuppositional apologetic, he thought that unregenerate minds could still grasp propositional truth through reason. With this established, Clark had a starting point to engage unbelievers. The apologist, then, must advocate for the logic of the Christian worldview. This is how apologetics serves evangelism.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Clark contended against the liberalism and modernism of his day. He held to the inerrancy of Scripture as a bulwark against the rise of neo-orthodoxy. His understanding that apologetics should show the comprehensive nature of Christianity is valuable. His impact on key evangelical figures cannot be underestimated. Clark encourages apologists to remember that apologetics serves evangelism.

Francis A. Schaeffer: Cultural Apologist

Historical Background: Francis A Schaeffer (ca. 1912) was an American-born apologist that gave his life to Christ in 1930 at an evangelistic tent meeting. His intellectual curiosity motivated Schaeffer to form L'Abri, an organization emphasizing prayer, worship, and providing Biblical answers.

Theological Context: The twentieth century proved the bloodiest yet most innovative of all times. Evangelicals like Schaeffer did not well receive the neo-orthodox beliefs of individuals such as Karl Barth.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: He defines a twofold purpose of apologetics, the first is defense, and the second is to communicate Christianity in a way that future generations can understand. In addition to his comments on modern culture and modern theology, he involved himself in environmental and social issues. Schaeffer's methodology was not characterized by a strict set of steps or methods but was based on personal conversations, museum visits, and university lectures. He said, "[...] I do not believe there is any one apologetic that meets all the needs." Additionally, Schaeffer was loosely defined as a presuppositionalist, believing that sanctification, the Holy Spirit, and prayer are vital to apologetics.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Schaeffer influenced many Christians through relationships, as well as through his works and the ministry of L'Abri. Schaeffer directly influenced the generation that interacted with him by inspiring many to become believers and some to become apologists like Charles Colson. He indirectly contributed to several life-changing institutions, such as the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Edward John Carnell: Finding Common Ground for Apologetics

Historical Background: Upon attending Wheaton, Carnell matured intellectually with the guidance of his philosophy professor and developed an interest in defending Christianity by applying logic. This interest inspired his future apologetic publications and aided neo-evangelicalism in its early days.

Theological Context: The Second World War caused many fundamentalists to distance themselves from the anti-intellectual stereotype. They named themselves

neo-evangelicals and were interested in interacting with scholarly literature about theology and philosophy.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Carnell believed that an appropriate apologetic should explore the common ground between belief and unbelief. The goal was to correlate the gospel with prior human thoughts of nature and existence. Carnell saw human nature as participating in a fourfold environment: rational, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual. Edward's methodology found a commonality between the scholar and the average person on the street.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Francis contributed to the apologetic field of the vitalities of love. He brought up concerns about revising fundamentalism to possess a more relational aspect.

Twentieth-Century European Apologists

A. E. Taylor: Defending the Relationship between Morality and Religion

Historical Background: Alfred E. Taylor (b. 1869) was born to devout Methodist parents in England. His father was a minister, and his Methodist upbringing significantly shaped his thinking. He eventually joined the Anglican tradition. He attended Oxford and was widely regarded as an excellent writer who was respected for his work in philosophy and moral apologetics.

Theological Context: Taylor founded and formed moral apologetics as a unique discipline. His magnum opus is *The Faith of a Moralist*, arguing that morality is becoming unmoored from religion. He further claims that the Enlightenment tried pulling morality and religion apart. Taylor saw great cultural/societal risk in abandoning God but still trying to keep morality. Taylor thought the moral evidence for God was stronger and more direct than that, even if it did not attain the level of a logical demonstration. He wanted to use moral values as a window into reality.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Taylor was against a wave of secularism and skepticism. In this environment, he provided a response that went beyond the empirical world by examining morality. He argued that something like adoration requires more than valueless facts or an ideal based on imagination; there must be something more. For Taylor, what we do is who we are. The moral life involves people reaching for something unreachable yet still known dimly. In this, he was

appealing to an intuitive or experiential transcendental good. Taylor suggested that a close examination of morality points beyond mere obligations to something more ultimate. There is a connection between the head and the heart.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Taylor contributed extensively to apologetics. He showed that morality points to a world where there is more than meets the eye. He desired, above all, to find truth. Both logically and experientially. This is something that naturalism cannot account for. Ultimately, his apologetic approach shows that the experience of moral value implies an eternal and unified fulfillment, which can be accomplished by God, who is the ground of value and being.

G.K. Chesterton: Apologist of the Literary Imagination

Historical Background: G.K. Chesterton was born to Anglican Unitarians in 1874 in the Victorian era, where it was commonly assumed that Christianity would eventually give way to secular humanism, but he ultimately became Catholic. As a teenager, he wrestled with profound mental and spiritual issues because he saw meaninglessness in the world and realized that he contributed to the evil around him.

Theological Context: Chesterton grew up in a predominantly liberal and secular England, which saw little philosophical gravitas from either Christians or atheists.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Chesterton lacked a system or method but was incredibly consistent, basing it on his artistic and poetic personality. He usually had three steps to his apologetics: first, he argued that modern man's problems came from insanity; second, he argued that man was uniquely creative; and third, he argued that the incarnation and the Church were evidence of divine intervention in history. Beginning with Descartes, humanity stopped looking outward for signs of divinity and started looking inward for meaning instead. Chesterton argues for man's distinction from nature and position above the angels by suggesting that only man has the capacity for creativity because humans are the only creatures who fabricate things simply for their beauty alone. The majority of Chesterton's apologetics come out of natural revelation. He believes that the Church, particularly the Roman Catholic institution with her sacraments, is how God graciously interacts with the world.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Unlike many other apologists, Chesterton approached apologetics creatively because he believed that conversion

was not only the result of argumentation. Moreover, Chesterton's creativity allowed his work to uniquely stand the test of time.

Dorothy L. Sayers: Pursuing Truth through Stories and Patterns

Historical Background: Born in 1893, Dorothy Leigh Sayers had an eye-opening experience as a young girl, which led her to recognize the order and mathematical formulation behind nature. She eventually became a Christian apologist who wrote novels but was deeply troubled by her own sin.

Theological Context: The cultural and intellectual environment was difficult for Christians in the mid-twentieth century, with many challenging traditional notions of truth. Sayers believed that the Truth was not a set of propositions but was Christ Himself. Furthermore, she saw scientific discovery as a part of the landscape of God's truth. Sayers believed that patterns were an inherent result of human creativity. She viewed the coming of Christ as the ultimate revelation of the pattern in which Christian thoughts and efforts fit.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Using detective fiction, Sayers persuaded her readers to uncover the truth by examining the evidence and discovering the pattern, reflecting her view of the truth. Through plays, Sayers dramatized Christian stories in part to teach a larger population of people the doctrines of the Christian faith, which she believed was the most exciting drama. *The Mind of the Maker*, published in 1941, gave a rational, Christian perspective on the issues of the day, thereby demonstrating the veracity of the Christian faith. Primarily, Sayers expresses the tripartite pattern of human creativity as an outworking of the Divine Trinity. Sayers also wrote many essays in order to develop and advertise many different ideas and beliefs, which take the form of prose pursuing truth.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Sayers is the most well-known and compelling female apologist, perhaps of all-time. She pioneered radio apologetics, helping a larger audience hear the gospel by capturing their imaginations.

C. S. Lewis: Imaginative Apologetics of a Reluctant Convert

Historical Background: C. S. Lewis (ca. 1898) went to Oxford University, and his first published book was called the *Pilgrim Regress*, which followed his apologetic journey of creating an argument founded on his conversion from

atheism to Christianity. Many of his writings, including the Narnia series, led to his rise in popularity in the 1940s as he became a representative of a broad and generous consensual Christian orthodoxy (layman for the Church of England and a Fellow of the British Academy).

Apologetic Response and Methodology: C. S. Lewis's apologetic approach emphasizes the intellectual capacity of Christianity by appealing to the complements of imagination and ordinary human experience, soon expanding his range in apologetics. The main focus C. S. Lewis brought to the apologetic realm was the aspect of theological translation as apologists engage those outside the church. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis's reasoning for his imaginative yet apologetic books was rooted in the beliefs that reason and imagination were collaborative, and illustrations were meant to challenge their perception, desire, meaning, and value in bridging fiction and reality. Conversations with J.R.R. Tolkien convinced Lewis to write the Narnia series more authentically Christian to make the reader consider themselves in the stories. During Lewis's time in Oxford, he wrote some of his most powerful works, such as 'A Grief Observed,' which included suffering and grief. His exploration of faith, rather than merely defending it, allowed these works to reach many people due to their honest and raw feelings from a Christian perspective.

Contribution to the Field of Apologetics: Lewis' approach to apologetics defies easy classification with its complex and creative understanding of reason and imagination. He rediscovered the power of narrative apologetics with his writing and is still one of the most widely-read Christian apologists.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: In Defense of Christian Witness

Historical Background: Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was born into an upper-middle-class family living in Germany. Unlike many of his neighbors, the large sweep of ignorant nationalism did not plague his thinking. Two days after Hitler was inaugurated, Bonhoeffer spoke out on a radio show against the position of führer and the grip it had on young people. He even predicted the strong possibility of a major war to come in 1932, a year before Hitler was in power. Then in 1935, he led the illegal Confessing Church seminary, where he wrote two famous Christian classics, *Life Together* and *Discipleship*. He died as part of a non-religious German resistance group that carried out assassination attempts on Hitler himself.

Theological Context: Bonhoeffer took a firm stand against liberal theology as he saw the terrible effects of the misuse and abuse of it all around him. He engaged

with many leading proponents of the thinking of Kant's morality, Hegel's philosophy, Schleiermacher's religious expressions, and Nietzsche's human nobility. It was the völkisch theology, however, which swept the nation as a German "Christian" movement. Völkisch theology promoted the redemption of Christ from the corrupted Jewish/Pauline influence and asserted him as an Aryan conqueror who promoted Germans as God's true chosen people. Therefore, Bonhoeffer found himself to be an apologist focused not as much on non-believers but with those claiming and distorting Christ for their own agendas.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: The depravity of humanity was a core pillar on which Bonhoeffer built his apologetic methodology. He argued that humanity is left stuck in a circle of sin unless something transcendent acts upon it. This he calls transcendent objectivity. Drawing from Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer argues that both the incarnation and crucifixion break the systematization of humans. He spoke out against the church settling for and living in "cheap grace" as opposed to recognizing the grace of God, which demands a response on humanity's part. Bonhoeffer contended that imitation and faith are synonymous. Opposed to the majority, he believed being a Christian required absolute submission and discipleship to God's word. Ironically with his significant influence on apologetics, he was not a fan of apologetics. He firmly believed faith was not a matter of convincing but rather a product of an encounter with Christ.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Bonhoeffer's contribution was unconventional, provocative, and long-lasting. Through the example of his life, he provided an example of what a selfless, courageous Christian looks like. At all costs, he sought to exalt Christ even when the price was great. He is quoted saying, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Apologist

Historical Background: Newbigin (1909-1998) was born in Northumbria, England, attended a Quaker boarding school, and studied at Cambridge University. During his first summer in college, he became a Christian after having a vision of a cross bridging heaven and earth. He served in India for a number of years and eventually retired with his wife in England.

Theological Context: One of the hats Newbigin wore was that of an ecumenist, as he sought to unite the divided church of Christ. He believed the church's neglect of missional work was at the epicenter of its division. Newbigin also contended that Western culture needed a missional encounter which the end of Christendom

proved as a need. With a rise in the acceptance of pluralism and moral relativity brought on by postmodernity, Newbiggin engaged with the nature of truth.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Newbiggin helped to establish the conversation about the contextualization of the gospel as times shifted into postmodernity. He heavily contended for matters of the gospel to be publicly discussed and debated, not just privately believed in. The gospel was a matter of public truth to Newbiggin because it concerned the general public's eternity. He utilized the understanding of the gospel as a narrative to contextualize and share its profound truth with people from all backgrounds. He also argued that the world should be seen through the lens of the gospel, not the other way around.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: For Newbiggin, the greatest apologist was not an intellectual debating an atheist but the local congregation engaging the culture which they loved. His experience within different denominations and cultures produced a dynamic approach to apologetics. He challenged Christians not to share a watered-down gospel but one rooted in the profound narrative of scripture.

Contemporary Apologists

John Warwick Montgomery: Evangelical, Evidential, and Confessional, Lutheran Apologist

Historical Background: Born in 1931, John Warwick Montgomery accumulated twelve degrees. In his early studies, he focused on the defense and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through his search to find the denomination that reflected the scriptures accurately, he became a confessional Lutheran grounded in the Reformation.

Theological Context: John Warwick stood firm in embracing biblical orthodoxy amid a culture pointing to theological liberalism and pluralism. Even in the Lutheran community, Montgomery defended the authority of Scripture which went against the shift that was occurring in the denomination.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Montgomery is an evangelical and evidential apologist who focused on Scripture inerrancy and confessing to his audience the saving message of Christ's atoning death and resurrection. He asserted that the Gospel is reliable by using his experience as an attorney and

barrister to present a historical and logical defense that utilized the “burden of proof.”

Contributions To The Field Of Apologetics: Montgomery most prominently developed a legal-historical case for Christ, focused solely on evidence within and surrounding the eyewitness accounts of Jesus. He was able to appeal to both the tough-minded and the tender-minded with his approach.

Charles Taylor: Apologetics in a Secular Age

Historical Background: Charles Taylor (b. 1931) was born in Montreal into a bilingual French-English household. This influenced his intellectual life and his understanding of language and identity. He studied at Oxford. Taylor was very interested in political activism. He ran for office, but eventually became a political consultant. Primarily, he was concerned with the unity of theory and practice. This interest led to a successful career in philosophy. His Christian faith played an integral role, even if implicit, in his philosophy.

Theological Context: Taylor shares many similarities with Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin saw that the Western church assumed many of secular modernity's presuppositions. Taylor agrees and calls for a missionary approach to Western culture. Christians need to be distant enough from the culture to properly diagnose its issues. This is mainly done through a historical perspective.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: For Taylor, secularism is socially constructed. Secularism's origins are found in the reform movements beginning in the Middle Ages. Taylor describes the formation of religions and their progress to an idea of a separate transcendence accessed by a few and the natural world lived in by most people. The Reformation did away with this view and disenchanting the world. Doing away with superstition and magic. This allows the individual to become a free agent. There is now space for disengaged reasoning, space between the individual and the world. The march toward secularism was interwoven with a desire to have a more personal, committed faith. Modern moral humanists are only possible because of the Christian social imaginary. Existing purely in the immanent frame creates an absence within our deepest moral and spiritual aspirations. All beliefs now become fragile, haunted by the missing transcendent. Taylor seeks to counter this development by recapturing the ethic of authenticity. His methodology is primarily presuppositional, pushing against evidential approaches he sees as negatively affecting belief in the transcendent. Taylor is

skeptical of approaches that ignore how our rationality is formed by our social imagination.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Taylor has contributed much to the conversation with naturalism. He identifies that naturalism is primarily motivated by moral aspirations and many of his anti-naturalistic arguments have yet to be answered. He points out that the high ideals many hold today only make sense in a Christian worldview that is being forgotten. Taylor is an important apologetic guide for countering the amnesia of this age.

Alvin Plantinga: Christian Philosophy as Apologetics

Historical Background: Alvin Plantinga (born 1932) is a highly distinguished and awarded philosophy professor and Christian apologist. His academic tenure extends across universities such as Harvard, Notre Dame, and Calvin.

Theological Context: Plantinga's apologetic rigor was shaped by his early years of scholarship, where he defended Christianity against prevalent philosophical challenges at the time. Additionally, his work was strengthened by his time at Calvin College.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Plantinga's apologetic method can be best described as reformed epistemology, which favors the experiential-presuppositional arguments for the theistic worldview. Plantinga stresses that theists and non-theists have completely different starting points in their philosophical arguments and that evidentialist arguments are not necessary to believe in God.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: One of Plantinga's main contributions to apologetics is his argument against the claim that the coexistence of evil and a perfect God is a logical contradiction, which he addresses in his work *The Nature of Necessity*. Plantinga advocated for Christians to unapologetically live out their faith in all areas of academia, including science.

Richard Swinburne: Pioneering Analytic Apologetics

Historical Background: Richard Swinburne (born 1934) is a Christian apologist, essayist, and professor whose philosophical defenses of virtually every major Christian doctrine have had substantial influence.

Theological Context: Swinburne, along with other Christian apologists in the 1950s, defended the use of religious language in academic realms as it was viewed as nonsensical. Swinburne used science and empirical evidence to craft a case for Christianity instead of bowing down to science as the only way to truth.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Swinburne is an expert at taking influential philosophical and scientific thought of his day and creating a case for Christianity from it. Swinburne was thorough in his defenses of Christianity as he brought philosophical/scientific arguments to defend the core doctrines of Christianity. His most influential book is *The Existence of God*, which strings together a coherent argument for how things like simple laws of nature and embodied humans provide a highly probable explanation for the existence of God.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Swinburne demonstrated to Christian apologists that they could build upon the theological thought of previous scholars, strategically plan and engage in their work, correct and form their arguments over time, and benefit even those who disagree with them. Swinburne thoughtfully crafted his defenses of the Christian faith to answer contemporary objections and popularly held presuppositions in scholarship.

Ravi Zacharias: Evangelist as Apologist

Historical Background: Ravi Zacharias (b. 1946) was born in India to a nominally Anglican family. His early life primed him for his future ministry. His cultural environment of various religious traditions and his struggles with despair and meaninglessness prepared him for the existential environment of the 21st century. After attempting to commit suicide, he came to Christ and promised his life would be dedicated to the pursuit of truth.

Theological Context: Zacharias was familiar with the pluralistic culture and wanted to bring the Gospel to the happy skeptic. He reacted against the anti-intellectualism that had grown in evangelical churches. The failure of Christian

speakers and influencers to reach the secular culture with the Gospel motivated Zacharias to build a ministry that could reach thinking people.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Zacharias viewed apologetics as a tool for evangelism. A cross-cultural, eclectic apologetic was needed for evangelism in a post-modern world. He used storytelling as a companion to an argument for Christianity. The Gospel is a story that needs to be argued. Zacharias focused his ministry on specific spheres of cultural influence and created the 3.4.5. method to examine and share a worldview. His method posited several categories for evaluating worldviews: (3) Logical Consistency, Empirical Adequacy, and Experiential Relevance; (4) Origin, Meaning, Morality, and Destiny; (5) Theology, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, and Anthropology. Ultimately, He made it a goal to connect the head and the heart in order to address the questioner, not just the question.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Zacharias' humble and bold approach is an attitude worth imitating. His ministry tagline demonstrates what apologetics is attempting to accomplish, "Helping the thinker believe and the believer think." The goal ought to be to win the person, not just the argument. Unfortunately, much of his apologetic impact is severely marred by the sexual deviancy that was revealed after his death. Let his failure be a good reminder that believers are to stay above reproach or risk devaluing their witness of the Gospel.

William Lane Craig: Philosopher as Apologist

Historical Background: William L. Craig (born 1949) enhanced the field of apologetics by utilization of Classical Apologetics and epistemology. He was deeply concerned with meaning from a young age. He attended seminary at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School after hearing a talk on God and evil by Norman Geisler. Eventually, he attended the University of Birmingham, where he developed a cosmological argument for the existence of God. He successfully completed his Ph.D. under John Hick. Craig then moved to Munich to study under Wolfhart Pannenberg. Here, he studied the resurrection of Jesus and developed a historical apologetic. After briefly taking a teaching position at Trinity, he realized his call to itinerant apologetic ministry. Dissatisfied with Christian speakers in the public arena, Craig set out to build a ministry that evangelized by providing a positive case for the Gospel.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Craig's methodology focuses on establishing the existence of God and the revelation of God through Jesus to build

a positive rational case for Christianity. This is commonly referred to as the Classical Apologetic approach. His response to the culture is to show, not merely say, that Christianity is true. By appealing to general revelation, Craig is able to make a case for Christianity to a broad audience of unbelievers. He commonly uses the Kalaam Cosmological Argument, which argues that if the universe began to exist, God is the likely cause.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Craig has contributed a significant amount of literature and resources for those examining or defending the Christian faith. His debates with atheists and agnostics have been instrumental in the public square. He has furthered the conversation and apologetic use of many topics within natural theology and historical evidence, notably including his cosmological argument and the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.

Gary R. Habermas: A Minimal Facts Ministry for Disciples and Doubters

Historical Background: Gary Habermas was born in Detroit in 1950. His journey to apologetics started with the loss of his grandmother during his childhood, which planted seeds of emotional doubt. He viewed Jesus's resurrection as the cornerstone of Christianity. The resurrection was an actual event that could be confirmed. He lost his wife, to whom he was married for 23 years, from an unexpected tragedy, stomach cancer. The ministry of apologetics contributed to his healing process.

Theological Context: Logical positivism was a sizeable philosophical movement from the 1920s to the 1950s. It viewed questions related to the philosophy of religion as meaningless because they could not be tested experimentally. There was also a growth of theistic and Christian philosophers at this time. During this same period, historians were addressing the issue of faith and evidence. Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann were less interested in questions of history for the Christian faith. During the middle of the 20th century, scholars realized that they had deviated from the value of the history of faith. This all contributed to Habermas's education.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: There were lengthy debates in the 1960s to 1980s on different apologetic methods. Habermas and John Warwick Montgomery believed evidence was important in defense of the faith. They drew from Paul's appeals to evidence showing the truth of Christianity in Acts 17 or 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. This became known as evidentialism. The evidentialist uses a

one-step method that evaluates particular data, usually historical, and directly argues for the truth of the Gospel.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Habermas' development of a minimal facts approach for the resurrection of Jesus has been instrumental in modern apologetics. The use of widely agreed-upon historical data to make a case that Jesus really did rise from the dead has impacted scholars and laypersons alike. Habermas has also significantly contributed to investigating near-death experiences and the Shroud of Turin. His evidential approach to these topics has an apologetic impact that encourages believers and challenges unbelievers.

Alister E. McGrath: Scientist and Theologian as Apologist

Historical Background: Alister McGrath was born in 1953 in Ireland. During his childhood, he was hostile toward Christianity until he converted while attending Oxford University in 1971.

Theological Context: McGrath focused his work on refuting naturalism and atheism, most notably the work of Richard Dawkins, by identifying ways these worldviews fail to answer the larger questions of life and reason. His work mainly dismantled the notion that Christianity and science are irreconcilable.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: McGrath points out that Christianity does not just work in the world but works best in the world. He did this through books and debates, showing how Christianity makes sense of a logical and rational world and arguing against the unnatural separation between science and religion. McGrath grounded his apologetic approach in the teachings of the Bible and the works of the apologists of the previous generations. McGrath approaches the process of pursuing knowledge by starting at the point where truth can be discovered. However, it must be done through one's own pursuit of understanding. He believes one can use extrabiblical sources as a "handmaiden" to his theology.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: McGrath provides a pragmatic and biblically accurate approach to the field of apologetics. He takes scholarly work and makes it practical for the average believer.

Timothy Keller: The Pastor as Apologist

Historical Background: Keller was born in 1950 in Pennsylvania. He grew up in a Christian family but did not become serious about his faith until college while participating in InterVarsity. Keller has been a pastor for most of his life. From a poor and primarily uneducated background, there was little expectation that he would become influential in the apologetics of the 21st century. However, this changed when he planted a church in New York that had several skeptics.

Apologetic Response and Methodology: Throughout his first book, *Reason for God*, Keller focuses on looking at the reasons why Christianity is rejected by people and then reframing those objections into something painting Christianity in a positive light. Keller later realized that many people were simply not interested in the arguments for Christianity that he had given in his first book. This encouraged Keller to look at how non-religious people show they have faith in something and then compare those claims to the claims of Christianity. Keller challenges the reader to take account of their worldview and look for places where it does not measure up.

Contributions to the Field of Apologetics: Keller is the pastor-apologist par excellence. He understood the complicated apologetics of the scholars of his day and interpreted them for the general public. Keller has contributed to apologetics by writing books, establishing churches, and encouraging other ministers. Keller's legacy continues due to his vibrant movement of reformed evangelical churches he helped raise in major cities.