

December 2022

Apologetics at the Cross: A Collaborative Article Review

Matthew H. Hamilton
mhhamilton@liberty.edu

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



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hamilton, Matthew H.. 2022. "Apologetics at the Cross: A Collaborative Article Review." *Eleutheria* 6, (2). <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eleu/vol6/iss2/3>

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.

Apologetics at the Cross: A Collaborative Article Review

Abstract

Apologetics at the Cross is a guidebook designed for contemporary times. It teaches students how to perform apologetics in a respectful manner while orienting them to an others-centered approach developed in cruciform communities. Chatraw and Allen's central conviction is that "Christian [apologetics] must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise it could not be *Christian* [apologetics]" (318). It explores the biblical and historical foundations of apologetics, practical guidance concerning engagement, and various methods/theological structures for apologetics. Ultimately, the authors put forth their very own *inside/out* approach to apologetics, which seeks to engage unbelievers in their cultural frameworks while drawing them to Christianity.

Keywords

Joshua D. Chatraw, Mark D. Allen, Zondervan Academic

Cover Page Footnote

Edited by Matthew H. Hamilton, MA in Christian Apologetics, 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 Ugonna Santana Kurt Voggenreiter Kiara Wilson Abigail Wright

Chatraw, Joshua D., and Mark D. Allen. *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018. 329 pages. ISBN: 9780310524687.

Author Introduction

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

Mark D. Allen has a PhD from the University of Notre Dame and a DMin. from Gordon-Conwell. He is a professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Liberty University whose research focuses on public theology, apologetics, and culture. Dr. Allen is a contributor to *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* and co-author of *The Augustine Way: Retrieving a Vision for the Church's Apologetic Witness* (forthcoming).

Summary

Apologetics at the Cross is a guidebook designed for contemporary times. It teaches students how to perform apologetics in a respectful manner while orienting them to an others-centered approach developed in cruciform communities. Chatraw and Allen's central conviction is that "Christian [apologetics] must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise it could not be *Christian* [apologetics]" (318). It explores the biblical and historical foundations of apologetics, practical guidance concerning engagement, and various methods/theological structures for apologetics. Ultimately, the authors put forth their very own *inside/out* approach to apologetics, which seeks to engage unbelievers in their cultural frameworks while drawing them to Christianity.

Introduction

Introduction: *Apologetics at the Cross* centers on one of the key terms in its title, namely apologetics. 1 Pet. 3:15 is an essential Scripture reference for such a project, with its inclusion of the Koine Greek *apologia* (meaning “defense” or “answer”). This verse is not a call to deliver intellectual punches, but rather “reasoned answers,” a “humble spirit,” and “joy.” Delivered to persecuted Christian communities, Peter teaches the manner in which one defends amidst hostility. Such an ethic will be a guiding principle throughout the book.

A Working Definition: Chatraw and Allen define apologetics as “the practice of offering an appeal and defense for the Christian faith.” To these authors, this activity eliminates doubt and skepticism to create an avenue of gospel reception.

Our Stories: Josh Chatraw initially considered apologetics to be irrelevant. Most apologists he knew were more concerned with winning arguments, often at the expense of their opponent. In the end, Chatraw determined that the gospel was the only necessary thing, thereby discounting apologetics.. It was only when he was exposed to and challenged by a diversity of perspectives that Chatraw shifted his view, as has was frustrated with his inability to answer critiques. For Mark Allen, apologetics seemed disassociated from the everyday life he lived. Moreover, the idea of becoming an apologist was intimidating to him (even though Allen initially found apologetics helpful). It wasn’t until his son (and students) had a crisis of faith that Allen realized the importance and relevancy of apologetics.

The Change in Culture: Western culture has changed in the past hundred years or so. Before contemporary times, it was not unreasonable to assume that most people believed in the existence of God. But times have changed drastically since that point, as faith is contested at every corner. Faith is fragile, and doubt is an almost ubiquitous counterpart to belief.

A Vision for Apologetics: Chatraw and Allen support “a biblical, historical, philosophical, theological, and practical vision for offering an appeal for Christianity in our contemporary context.” While many great books have been written on apologetics (of which the authors are indebted too), Chatraw and Allen believe in an integrative approach to apologetics. They finish the introduction by highlighting the apologetical “house” that will be built by the proceeding chapters.

Part 1: The Foundation for Apologetics at the Cross

Chapter 1: Apologetics in the Bible: Part 1

1 Corinthians 2:1:5: The Cross and Apologetics: 1 Cor. 2:1-5 is commonly used against apologetics; however, if examined contextually, one can see that this piece of scripture is not necessarily speaking against apologetics. Paul is not indicting *reasoning proper*, but rather a certain form of *manipulative persuasion*. In the Mediterranean world, speakers and their content were evaluated by their rhetorical ability. If something did not meet the Sophists (practiced rhetoricians) standards, then it was judged as inferior. In 1 Cor. 2:1-5, Paul is (1) focused on the content of the Cross and (2) arguing that everything matters only if viewed through the cross. For Chatraw and Allen, the goal of apologetics is the cross, which as “a symbol of humility and suffering, should shape the way we do apologetics.” The first several chapters will contain an inductive approach to the Bible, in which the text is allowed to speak for itself on how apologetics should be performed.

Creation, General Revelation, and Providential Care: Natural and general revelation are adequate knowledge sources of God. In some ways, both entities are apologists themselves, declaring His glory. According to Romans 1:18-25, however, revelation is suppressed by human beings. Humans will deny and twist the truth, often leading them to bow before creation rather than the creator. The providential care of God for the world and His people are also apologetic in two ways. (1) His nurture and care for the world, and (2) His deliverance of the Israelites. Even if we do not understand the sufferings and hardships of this world, God’s temporal acts of care are glimpses of who He is and the world that is to come. In this sense, providential care is an apologetic defense.

Polemic: In the Old Testament, the primary concern was not with the existence of gods, but rather which god was true. Often, to combat claims of other religions, the prophets would employ the practice of polemics. A polemic involves taking the thought-forms, expressions, motifs, and stories of a particular culture and filling them with radically new meaning. It was through these rhetorical practices that the prophets not only spoke *against* ANE culture (challenging a polytheistic and ANE worldview, including the cosmology present in the creation account) but also identified *with* it as well (sharing a conceptual world, such as placing a higher emphasis on supernatural activity). Lastly, the Old Testament is *for* the various cultures and peoples of its day. Israel was to be a blessing for the world. Both the OT and NT use polemics as a culturally relevant defense of the one true God.

Miracles and Acts of Power: In the Old Testament, God's miracles/acts of power were employed as a defense against other deities and as a case for the ontological reality of Israel's God. An infamous example of this is when Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal. While the latter's prophets are unable to light an altar of wood, God rains fire down on it and its surroundings, consuming everything (1 Kgs. 18). Jesus also performed miracles to validate His divine identity, God's ubiquitous love, and His message about the kingdom of God. The early church continued to perform miracles to verify that God was at work (Acts 2, 1 Cor. 12). As a result, it may be concluded that miracles can be a powerful apologetic for God.

Historical Verification, Eyewitness Testimony, and Evidence: There are many instances of historical verification and eyewitness evidence for the person and works of Jesus Christ. A salient example is that of Luke, who "carefully investigated" the events of the gospel so that people could have confidence in his account. Additionally, there are many other eyewitness accounts of Christ scattered throughout the New Testament, adding further validation to his historical reality and bodily resurrection.

Fulfilled Prophecy: One apologetical method favored by New Testament authors was that of fulfilled prophecy. Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by Christ were used to convince unbelieving Jews and bolster Christians. As the intended goal of the Old Testament, Jesus fulfills all hope and many specific prophecies such as being born in Bethlehem.

Christians as Good Citizens with Exemplary Character and Love: For those who claim to follow Jesus, their lives should show evidence of God's reality and sovereignty.

- **Salt and Light-** Christians are called to be salt and light in a world of darkness. As salt, believers are to prevent moral decay and function as a device for good things. As light, all deeds of the Christian community should orient others to God, ultimately leading them to praise Him. "The humble, cruciform lives of Gods people are meant to be an apologetic for the reality of the kingdom of heaven."
- **By This Everyone Will Know-** In the Upper Room Discourse, Christ argues that self-sacrificial, cruciform love, testifies to His reality and mission. The mutual submission, unity, and self-sacrificial nature of Christianity makes more plausible the theological truths it professes.
- **Good Citizens-** Christianity is a transformative faith, not a military movement. Believers in the early church had to struggle with the reality of Christ's distant return. They were immediate citizens of political institutions, but also citizens of a Kingdom to come. Chatraw and Allen argue that the church needed to learn not only how to

peacefully coexist with the state, but also how faith drives one to be an upright citizen. Good citizenship is a powerful apologetic.

Stopping for a Breather: Chatraw and Allen conclude their chapter by noting that an overwhelming degree of material has been presented to potentially unfamiliar readers. Both authors, however, affirm that “Apologetical methods should not be understood apart from the climatic event of Jesus’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The shape and orientation of apologetics should always be cruciform.”

Chapter 2: Apologetics in the Bible: Part 2

A Definitive Biblical Approach to Apologetics?: Similar to its less than systematic instruction on many issues, Scripture does not contain a definitive approach to apologetics. No one, universal, objective method for performing apologetics exists in the Bible. It was written in different contexts involving a variety of situations and audiences. Therefore, it offers many tools and principles with can be applied across a multitude of situations. Chapter 2 adds nine more biblical apologetic categories to the six explored in the previous chapter.

Personal, Ecclesial, and Holy Spirit Testimony: There are three agents for apologetics in the Bible including the individual, the church, and the Holy Spirit. All three work together to display the presence of God. The individual is an interpersonal witness to the reality of God, while the people of God give evidence of His existence, and the Holy Spirit is a persuader for God’s actuality.

- **Image of God, Wisdom, and Personal Experience-** Humans are created in the image of God. This entails containing His very essence and representing God via stewardship and rule. Such notions stood in stark contrast to other ANE (and for that matter, contemporary) philosophies, which saw human beings merely as tools for the gods. Humans exist on earth to fulfill the purposes of God. Scripture is home to “wisdom literature,” which serves as an apologetic by demonstrating that life operates best with God at the center. Struggle is ubiquitous, but Christianity’s holistic approach possesses the power to bring contentment and harmony. Finally, personal experience of God can serve as an existential apologetic by convincing people of His existence and changing their way of life.
- **The Church-** The corporate expansion of the church is not by itself proof of God’s existence. However, the growth of the church over the span of hundreds of years is sufficient evidence of God’s work. The

good works of the church are also a witness to the reality of God. The church is the embodied manifestation of Christ.

- The Holy Spirit as an Apologist- The Holy Spirit plays an engaged role in helping humanity receive and understand the gospel. While persons may have the cognitive capacity to understand theological truths, many times they are blinded to truth by sin. The Holy Spirit provides spiritual discernment and testifies to the presence and things of God to believers. In many senses, He is the catalyst for spiritual happenings. The Holy Spirit also visibly manifests in the lives of Christians (worship, fruits, etc.), providing further evidence of God's reality.

Raising Questions with an Intent to Undermine or Disarm False Beliefs: In the Bible God frequently poses insightful questions to challenge false beliefs. Examples of this methodology include Job and the problem of self-suffering, Jesus and paying taxes, etc. While this form of questioning proves little apologetically, it provides the recipient space to reflect on their assumptions. Many times, it also provides the apologist time to listen, creating richer and more intimate dialogue.

Answering Objections: Objections to one's faith can be immediate or predicated/anticipatory. Explanation and reframing are two ways of responding to such critiques.

- Explanations- Many times in response to an objection, Scripture anticipates and responds with an explanation. Examples of this include parables, witty sayings, Old Testament fulfillment, stories, etc. (often being performed by Christ).
- Reframing- As Allen and Chatraw state, "Scriptures often redraw our mental maps, rescript our narratives, and reframe our perceptual models" (52). Often, direct confrontation isn't needed, but rather a changing of the entire playing field.

Reasons for Suffering:

- Lament: Registering a Complaint with God- Suffering is in the world and the Bible never hides from this fact. Through His Word, God sends an invitation to suffers, inviting them to engage with Him through their grievances and complaints.
- Why Do We Suffer?- Considering our omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God, the Bible provides reasons for human suffering. Justifications include human sin, disobedience, achievement of a greater good, further insight into God, following Christ, actions of human leaders, loving discipline, soul-making, and proving faith.

- **God Suffers-** Christianity presents a God who became completely human, and though that process experienced every hurt that we do. This creates a unique sort of empathy between Creator and created. Christ's resurrection gives people hope beyond the immediate suffering they experience.
- **Suffering Points to the Existence of God-** Counterintuitive as it may sound, the existence of suffering and evil can be an apologetic for God's existence. Evil and suffering point to a world that is not as it should be. However, can evil exist without a knowledge of good? God is the ground for moral knowledge, and as such, when one laments about evil, they really acknowledging His existence.

Logic and Reason: Scripture utilizes both logic and reason throughout its contents.

- **That Sounds Reasonable-** Often, logic is used to demonstrate the reasonableness of theological propositions. This form of reasoning is performed within the context of the intended audience. This should not be thought of as modal logic or rational thought, but rather a use of general reason.
- **The Limits of Reason-** There are multiple limits to rationality: [1] "Whose rationality?" (Modern Enlightenment rationality vs. premodern ANE culture) [2] God is transcendent to humanity's cognitive ability [3] Humans are more than thinking beings, we are also beings with affections.

Apocalyptic Apologetic: Apocalyptic literature can help suffering communities reconcile a painful mode of living with a seemingly inactive God. Apocalyptic literature can be an apologetic to those situated in marginalized communities. As Chatraw and Allen state: "Apocalyptic literature provides a suffering community a framework that enables them to make sense of what seems to be the inactivity of God and the ascendancy of evil. It offers them an apologetic, explaining to them that God will put an end to all evil and will establish justice and peace forever, ensuring an eternal reward for all who persevere" (57)

- **Apologetical Aspects of Apocalypticism-** [1] Opposing powers (There is an ongoing cosmic battle between God and Satan. This can help explain why oppressed communities experience suffering.) [2] Sovereignty (Gods Plan for History and his Ultimate Victory) [3] Last Things (God's Final Judgement of Evil and Establishment of His Peaceful and Righteous Kingdom)

Arguments from Pagan Sources: A famous example of argumentation in Scripture is that of Paul's engagement on Mars Hill. Here, Paul appropriates pagan sources

to make critiques of Greek philosophy. He is operating within the plausibility structure of his audience, taking their Greek source and reimagining (and weaponizing) it in light of considering biblical truth. This demonstrates that the Bible is not against the utilization of secular narratives, as they recapitulated for Christian purposes.

Jesus' Unique Authority: Christ's teaching in all forms possesses such self-testifying authority that it has apologetic value. Throughout Scripture, people recognize that Jesus's words carry authority. This power continues through the work and action of His followers.

Story: Scripture is a grand narrative comprised of individual micro narratives.

- **The Smaller Stories-** There are many examples of smaller stories within Scripture. These would include OT polemics, the world of Ecclesiastes, and Jn. 1:1. Each of these individual narratives necessarily contrast with any opposing schema, rendering them effective apologetic content. In other words, there is a diversity of Scriptural works which ultimately blend into one unified, canonical narrative.
- **The Big Story-** The grand narrative of Scripture can be articulated (simply) as Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation. It claims to be the best story, superior to any other form of cultural narrative. Contemporary times are within redemption and new creation. Both living in and living the grand narrative is an important behavioral apologetic.

Conclusion: Contextual and Cross-Centered: Fifteen approaches have been presented to the reader as a demonstration of Scripture's apologetic world. A noteworthy observation is that the Bible takes a contextual approach to apologetics. Progressive revelation is oriented to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. According to Chatraw and Allen, "An apologetic should be measured by the degree of clarity with which it points to and functions in light of the most important event in human history" (61).

Chapter 3: Apologetics within the Great Tradition: Part 1 (Isaiah)

The Builders Who Went Before Us: In this chapter, the authors examine the history of apologetics. They draw from the rich heritage of the church to finish the foundation of their apologetic approach. While apologetics needs to be shaped for the contemporary environment, there is much to be learned from past apologists.

The Early Church: The early church had to contend with many intrinsic and extrinsic challenges that made apologetics necessary for the church's survival. It was within a climate of heresy and persecution that the church had to formulate an apologetic defense.

- **Heretical Challenges-** Various heretical ideas arose that compromised the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Often, these heresies started by attempting to make the Christian faith more accessible and effective. The Gnostics held that only those who had secret forms of knowledge could access God. Marcionism divided the Old and New Testament into good and bad. For them, the O.T. God and law were bad, while the N.T. Jesus and Gospel were good. Manichaeism believed in a universal religion where there is a cosmic and equal battle between good and evil; Jesus' suffering was symbolic. The Arians contended that Jesus was a created being with a lesser nature than the Father. All of these heresies denied at least one element of what eventually became Trinitarian theology. They often either rejected the divinity or humanity of Jesus. The early church fathers condemned these views and mounted a variety of defenses against them. Irenaeus argued against those who believed in secret knowledge by pointing out that Christ and the apostles acted publicly for all to see. Further, the Gospel was preached publicly for all to hear. All can know the truth of Christianity. Tertullian argued against the Marcionites by showing how the O.T. and N.T. point to the same God. Augustine argued against the Manichaeans by demonstrating that Jesus came physically and that he suffered for the salvation of man. Finally, Athanasius argued that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. He defended Jesus' divinity by pointing out that only God can save humanity through a sacrifice that fulfills his justice and mercy; Jesus is the perfect savior only if he is God. These defenses against the early heretics are relevant in combatting modern forms that still exist.
- **Jewish Religious Challenges-** There were many challenges against the early church from the Jewish communities. They often raised issues with the O.T. law, Jesus as Messiah, and the worship of Jesus instead of Yahweh. Justin Martyr, a pagan philosopher turned Christian, addressed several of the most common Jewish objections in a written work that takes on an amiable tone. He pointed out that the O.T. prophecies affirm the Messiahship of Jesus, that Christians have a better O.T. interpretational lens because of the new covenant, and that the church is the new Israel.

- Greek and Roman Challenges- The Hellenistic culture surrounding the early church gave rise to political, cultural, and philosophical challenges.
 - Political and Cultural Challenges- The political and cultural challenges often created an existential threat to the church. They were accused of many things, including incest and cannibalism. These false accusations were primarily born out of the culture's misunderstanding of Christian beliefs and practices. The early church responded in a way that the contemporary church should imitate. They responded to the challenges and by demonstrating that Christian faith and practice are beneficial for the flourishing of society and culture. Early apologists argued that the Christian God is superior to other gods and that Christians are virtuous citizens. They posited that religious plurality should allow space for Christianity, especially since Christianity is a rooted and ancient religion. The apologist also argued that Christianity, and its followers, were good for the Roman empire. With much contemporary antagonism toward the church, we should answer similarly by showing the value and viability of the Christian faith.
 - Philosophical Challenges- There were also robust philosophical challenges against the early church. These included objections to the story of Jesus (virgin birth, miracles, etc.), historical objections, objections to exclusivity/inclusivity, accusations of blind faith, and arguments claiming that pagan religion is better for a flourishing society. Early Christians responded to these challenges by addressing specific objections and making broad appeals for the faith. They used many different approaches and methods in their apologetics, including metaphor, exposition, point-by-point refutation, sarcasm, dialogue, paradox, desire, faith and reason, Christological coherence, and understanding logos. Each approach targeted a specific philosophical argument with a unique response and made a positive case for Christianity in the relevant cultural context. For example, using a cumulative case argument, Eusebius combines several lines of evidence to build a case for the validity of Christianity. He traced the church back to the patriarchs in the O.T. and demonstrated how the gospels fulfill O.T. prophecies. He also presented arguments affirming N.T. Christianity by showing the superior morality of Christ, the validity of the Gospel

against Greek philosophy, examining the miracles of Jesus, and demonstrating the credibility of the apostles. In doing so, he addressed objections to the newness of Christianity, historical critiques, and blind faith objections. This cumulative method is flexible and has been used several times throughout church history. Each of the approaches listed above has been useful and effective at various times in addressing philosophical objections. The contemporary church finds itself in a similar context to the early church. We can learn a lot about responding appropriately to contemporary culture and philosophy from the early church.

The Middle Ages: While some of the issues from the Patristic Age continued, the Middle Ages produced new challenges. As Christianity expanded, it became necessary to synthesize the vast expanse of Christian thought.

- Heretical Challenges- Two heresies continued to challenge the church in the Middle Ages: Nestorianism and Eutychianism. Nestorianism held that Jesus had two natures and two persons, splitting Jesus into a human and divine person. Eutychianism believed that Jesus had one nature; the divine and human were intertwined so thoroughly that a new, third nature was produced in Christ.
- Jewish and Muslim Challenges- For Christian apologists, the Middle Ages was dominated by a mission to reach the Jews in the West and combat the rising threat of Islam in the East. Each of these produced new challenges that required Christian leaders to consider questions of synthesis and integration.
- Responses- In responding to the issues in the Middle Ages, apologists used many different approaches. While not all are appropriate for the twenty-first century, the contemporary church can learn valuable lessons from them. These methods included speaking the language of philosophy and theology, condemning opposing beliefs and defending Christian beliefs, using allegory, demonstrating the rationality of Christianity, proving the existence of the greatest being, reasoning one's way to faith, respecting your opponents, and using an eclectic approach. For example, the famous theologian Thomas Aquinas argues for the truth of Christianity starting from reason and natural revelation in order to reason one into the Christian faith.
- Aquinas believed that unbelievers could be shown certain truths without special revelation. Proper use of reason would lead one to believe in the authority of Scripture which revealed unique theological truths. Rather than merely attacking opponents and asserting the truth

of Christianity, Aquinas thought that one could reason with an unbeliever to point to the Christian faith. This is one of the many methods explored by the Medieval church for the purpose of combating objections from hostile religions.

Turning to the Reformation: The period directly following the Middle Ages was contentious and full of internal arguments. The church largely turned away from addressing other religions to arguing about doctrine. This would allow the rising tide of modernism and skepticism to go unaddressed in the coming decades. As the skeptical environment gained more cultural influence, Christian apologists would need to develop new responses to a movement that went unnoticed for far too long.

Chapter 4: Apologetics within the Great Tradition: Part 2 (Isaiah)

Keeping the Cross at the Center: This chapter examines apologetics from the Reformation to the twentieth century and concludes the discussion on apologetics through church history. The authors assert that effective apologetics is a flexible endeavor that changes to appropriately address new challenges. They further argue that a properly grounded and sustainable apologetic approach must have the cross of Jesus at the center. This means ensuring that the full Gospel is preserved regardless of any desire to make it more agreeable.

The Protestant Reformation: The Protestant Reformation, started by Martin Luther, was a reform movement that attempted to address the rampant corruption and immorality in the Catholic church. The intense nature of this period caused the church to turn inward with its apologetic endeavors. This would shape the church's understanding of apologetics for generations to come.

- Philosophy and Reason Must Yield to the Cross- Luther challenged the use of reason in coming to faith. He held that true reason only exists within the faith. Outside of Christianity, reason is worthless until submitted to the Gospel.
- Reason Can Prepare a Person for Faith in the Gospel- Philipp Melanchthon eventually came to disagree with Luther. He believed that reason could be useful in preparing an unbeliever to accept the truth of the Gospel. There are some truths that reason can attain outside of special revelation.
- The Spirit Gives Inner Testimony to the Truthfulness of Scripture- John Calvin agreed with Melanchthon with an important caveat; namely, that sin has broken the noetic structures of humanity. While

human beings can understand things about God and the Bible, it is only the power and witness of the Holy Spirit that convinces them of the truth of Christianity. Thus, none come to the faith by reason alone.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation: The Catholic Church had a reformation within itself that included responses to the Protestant Reformers. In this Counter-Reformation, the Catholics continued producing apologetic material, like that of Juan Luis Vives, that defended Christianity against the challenges of other faiths.

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Enlightenment was a time of transition. The West began to emphasize individual autonomy, the goodness of human nature, and the value of progress through science. Figures like Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Voltaire, Hume, and Kant established and expounded on ideas/methods like empiricism, rationalism, and individualism. This age of modernity valued reason above all else. Thus, apologists in this era produced rational arguments to respond to Enlightenment challenges.

- Pascal: Logic of the Heart- Pascal was a genius in the seventeenth century, producing many important inventions, discoveries, and arguments. He dealt with challenges emerging from deism, skepticism, and apathy. His apologetic work, *Pensées*, is an incomplete compilation of his methodology and approach. In this fragmented writing, Pascal appeals to reasons of the heart. Here, he uses experiences, history, and intuitive reason to point to the Christian God. He also believed that humanity can only understand its meaning in light of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. One of his most famous arguments is also found in *Pensées*, the wager. He contends that every person makes a bet in life and that Christianity is the best bet, even if it is wrong. Finally, he argues in a similar vein to Augustine by claiming that every person knows they have a God-sized hole in their hearts that can only be filled by God himself.
- Grotius: In Defense of the New Testament- Grotius builds on past apologetic works with a unique personal addition. He uses a critical methodology to affirm the writings of the N.T. and support the credibility of the authors. Grotius utilizes inconsistencies in the Gospels to prove there was no collusion between the writers.
- Butler: An Apologetic of Probability- Butler wrote primarily against the deists of his day through analogies, probability, and cumulative cases. Using analogies, he argued from natural revelation to special revelation. Using probability, Butler contends that humanity's partial knowledge of the supernatural is expected. The knowledge humanity does have makes the truth of Christianity highly probable. Using a

cumulative case, he brings together various types of evidence together to create a strong overall argument in defense of the Christian faith.

- Paley: The Watchmaker- Paley's argumentation has been highly influential for centuries. He contended that the eyewitness testimony in the N.T. is reliable because no person would be willing to spread lies to promote virtue, nor would they be willing to suffer so much for something they knew was false. Paley further argued, using the analogy of a watchmaker, that the world is an immensely complex design that points to a supreme designer.
- Leibniz: The Best of All Possible Worlds- Leibniz produced a theodicy addressing the problem of evil. His best-of-all-possible-worlds argument contends that God created the best possible world where evil contributes to a greater good. Evil comes from man's limitations and free action.

The Nineteenth Century: Nineteenth-century apologetics were largely a reaction against the Enlightenment. Some apologists rejected the foundations of modernity, while others opted to work within the modernist framework.

- Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard: Existential Apologetics- Schleiermacher created a new apologetic when he stated that the true essence of Christianity is an experience of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. If one allows the power of the Holy Spirit to work, then one will experience a God-consciousness. He refused to use rational arguments or evidence. Instead, contending that Christianity was the best way to experience the transcendent divine within the social environment of the church. In his attempt to make Christianity acceptable to his contemporaries, Schleiermacher goes too far by changing the center of Christian belief. Kierkegaard, the melancholy Dane, reacted against the ideas that one could be a Christian based on nationality and the Hegelian philosophy that thought of reality as an unfolding of an Absolute Mind. For Kierkegaard, the individual must take a leap of faith to live out the truth. The lived faith is the true faith, not merely agreed-upon doctrinal statements. He rejected the use of reason in becoming a Christian. Faith is not a rational thing; the incarnation is an absurdity. This absurdity is the thing humanity needs to be brought closer to reality.
- Chateaubriand: Apologetics of Beauty- Chateaubriand argued that Christianity is true because of the beauty, virtue, and goodness it produces. Christianity is beneficial for the flourishing of society and thus comes from God.

- Newman: Apologetics of Converging Probabilities- Newman showed how the convergence of probabilities from philosophical and historical arguments points to the truth of Christianity. By examining the historical data, he argued that it would be nearly impossible for all of these historical events to happen as they did unless the story was true. The convergence of historical accounts makes Christianity highly probable.
- Kuyper and Orr: Worldview Apologetics- Kuyper rejected apologetics as he defined it. Yet, he created an apologetic system that showed how Christianity produces the only way to make sense of the world as a whole. In a similar way, Orr established an apologetic approach that posited Christianity as a lens through which to understand the world. Orr believed that apologetics must start with the incarnation and argue for a robust Christian worldview.

The Twentieth Century: The twentieth century developed and used a variety of apologetic approaches, with many drawing from past methods. Often, there is a synthesis of different forms and ideas in order to address contemporary challenges.

- Warfield: Rational Proof- Warfield saw value in apologetics for defending the authority and inerrancy of Scripture against the skeptics. He held that unbelievers could be convinced of certain truths through rational arguments.
- Van Til: Presuppositional Apologetics- Van Til established the presuppositional apologetic approach. This approach argued that reason and knowledge can only be grounded in the Christian worldview. One must assume and accept a Christian worldview in order to know it is true. Van Til argued that the unbeliever was living a life of absurdity that only became meaningful and sensible once they began to think within the Christian faith.
- Carnell and Schaeffer: Combinationalism- Combinationalism used several tests to show that Christianity was true. Carnell believed that unbelievers could be shown through reason that Christianity was highly probable. The truth of Christianity could be known through experience, probable reason, and doing. Schaeffer, similar to Carnell, thought that Christianity could be accepted as a reasonable worldview and then demonstrated as a position that fits with reality. He often showed how non-Christian worldviews did not fit with reality and pointed out the various points of tension that caused them to collapse.
- Chesterton, Lewis, and Sayers: Literary Apologetics- Literary apologetics emerged from several thinkers in England. Chesterton was

converted to Christianity because its critics were inconsistent and contradictory in their attacks. He was an excellent writer who critiqued culture using paradox, humor, sarcasm, and elegance. His work impacted C. S. Lewis, who appreciated Chesterton's incisive commentary. Lewis used his literary skills to craft an eclectic apologetic that touched on longing, imagination, and reason. His vivid writing style across a variety of genres made his apologetic arguments impactful and understandable for the common man. Sayers, a contemporary of Lewis, leveraged her ability to write crime novels in making various apologetic arguments. These included the reality of humanity's broken state and the joy of good work.

- Barth: Nein Apologetics?- Barth had a largely negative view of traditional apologetics. He believed that people can only come to faith through the revelation of God in Christ and the special revelation of Scripture. God is so other that human reason is worthless to reach him. Once God is encountered, then human reason is redeemed to the degree that it is useful. His poor view of apologetics caused many to reject the validity of apologetics in the twentieth century.
- Balthasar: Aesthetic Apologetics- Balthasar believed that the beauty of God's love as expressed in the life of the church was an effective apologetic centered on the reality of God's goodness and truth.
- Newbigin: Christ and Culture- Newbigin developed an apologetic that understood more than rational argumentation was needed for one to become a believer. For Newbigin, Augustine was correct in asserting that faith came before reason. Once faith was established, then reason became useful. This is not to deny the existence or use of reason for the unbeliever. However, the force of Newbigin's approach is to show that every belief ultimately rests on faith and that Christianity is the best way to live life.

Conclusion: This overview of apologetics throughout history serves to nearly complete the foundation of the author's apologetic house. Contemporary approaches will be examined elsewhere. The purpose is to now have a framework for the rest of the discussion.

Part 2: The Theological Structure for Apologetics at the Cross

Chapter 5: Making Sense of the Methods

Different Approaches to Drawing Apologetic Maps: Begins with a summary of the book thus far, explaining how both biblical and historical approaches to apologetics do not have a rigid methodology. This encourages flexibility in strategy, and the willingness to listen to multiple approaches. Chapter 5 will summarize four apologetic methods and discuss their strengths and weaknesses.

Classical Apologetics (or the Two:Step Approach): The classical approach to apologetics involves two steps: (1) a general argument for theism and (2) Christianity as the most probable and reasonable form of theism. The classical approach has the advantage of gently persuading a reticent skeptic. It typically places a high emphasis on the power of human reason. Special revelation, however, is still required for conversion.

- Potential Strengths of Classical Apologetics- Classical apologetics emphasizes the Bible's utilization of evidence and logic to persuade. It has also promoted rapid and efficacious production of evidence for the faith. These include scientific, philosophical, and historical type arguments.

Evidentialist Apologetics (or the One:Step Approach): Alternatively known as the one-step approach. Like classical apologetics, it too has a high degree of confidence in the efficacy of human reason apart from special revelation. Unlike apologetics. It does not believe that a general case for theism is necessary. Instead, it makes a variety of historical arguments to establish the veracity of Christianity (reliability of Scripture, identity of Jesus, and resurrection of Christ).

- Potential Strengths of Evidential Apologetics- The evidential approach is the most efficient at taking the discussion to the essential elements of the gospel: Christ, his death, and resurrection. The rigorous historical argumentation incentivized by the evidential approach meshes well with a gospel that is entrenched in history.
- Potential Weaknesses of Evidence-Based Approaches (Classical and Evidentialist Apologetics)- These weaknesses can apply to both classical and evidential methods, since they fundamentally agree in frameworks, but disagree in steps. Chatraw and Allen stress that these

are only potential weaknesses, like the above are only potential strengths. Evidence-based approaches can envision humans as primarily cognitive beings, and therefore present persuasions that appeal mostly to the mind. Given that human beings are also believing and desiring beings, evidential apologetics can risk being ineffective by not accounting for overlapping dimensions of human commitments. The Christian faith is more than acceptance of propositions concerning God. Evidence-based approaches can lack an appreciation for human situatedness. Given the multiplicity of cultural and value frameworks inaccessible by proposed universal logic, evidentialist/classical apologetics may be frustrated in the lack of reception for their arguments. Scripture should also assess what makes a good argument. It is the determiner of successful argumentation, rather than autonomous human reason. While evidence-based approaches are effective at “thin reasoning” (playing by the rules of current methodology), it should also employ “thick reasoning” where it challenges the foundations of fellow interpretive frameworks.

- Soft versus Hard Classical Apologetics- Hard classical apologetics insists that a logical argument for theism must precede any form of logical argumentation. Soft classical advocates, like William Lane Craig, who prefer a two-step method but are willing to admit it may not be necessary in every situation.
- Soft versus Hard Evidential Apologetics- Hard evidentialist apologetics would only include historical evidence for Jesus, the resurrection, and the Bible. This, however, is rarely adopted as a formal position. Most evidentialists tend to be of the softer variety, who merely think that classical arguments aren't necessary.

Presuppositional Apologetics: As Chatraw and Allen state, “Presupposition, as its name suggests, asserts that reasoning does not take place in a vacuum; rather, a person’s reasoning is colored by their presuppositions or assumptions – the lenses through which they see the world. There is no neutral realm where reason alone exists and operates; there is no perfectly objective vantage point from which a person can see and interpret the world without presuppositions” (117). For those following the tradition of Cornelius Van Til, traditional apologetic arguments which rely on reason make humanity the judge of God, rather than submitting to God as judge. Articulating the corruption of human reasoning/spirituality, an attempt is made to undermine the very framework of non-Christian thinking. The Bible should be the assumed starting point in apologetic discourse. Any worldview inconsistent with Christianity cannot account for truth, morality, logic, etc. These things, if used, are “borrowed” capital from a Christian worldview. This line of reasoning is known as the transcendental argument.

- Potential Strengths of Presuppositional Apologetics- There are multiple advantages to this method of apologetics. It emphasizes (1) the importance of Scripture (2) that non-Christians assume presuppositions that negatively impact their reasoning ability (3) that sin damages the whole person.
- Potential Weaknesses of Presuppositional Approaches- Most apologists do not find the transcendental argument alone can demonstrate the truthfulness of Christianity. Other worldviews can have intelligible accounts of reality, even if they subtly have less explanatory capacity. There is plenty within the Christian worldview that many find irrational (Trintiy, etc.), which can operate as a rhetorical turn against the presuppositionalist. Second, presuppositionalists have lacked the ability to effectively transfer their methodology and arguments to a broad audience. This is because of many reasons: antagonism, lacking specifics, and circular reasoning.
- Soft versus Hard Presuppositional Apologetics- Hard presuppositionalists maintain that a transcendental argument should be distinguished from evidence-based arguments. Soft presuppositionalists argue that the transcendental argument (TA) should be the goal of all apologetic arguments. In the process of developing (TA), an apologist should be encouraged to use traditional proofs, as these serve to legitimate a Christian framework of the world. Soft presuppositionalism, therefore, becomes more of an attitude and orientation, rather than empirical phenomenon.

Experiential/Narrative Apologetics: E/N apologists argue that reason and evidence depends on contextual framework, and there is pessimism regarding human reason apart from special revelation. "...E/N apologists interact with unbelievers by inviting them to participate in an experience and embrace a story that fits better with the actualities of life" (121). There is intense disagreement with traditional proofs, as these rely on a series of propositions, not the lives of the community of faith and the power of the apostolic message. The truths of Christianity come in narrative form, and therefore must be embraced and lived out in order to be understood. When performing apologetics, E/N apologetics presents the gospel story to unbelievers and ask them to observe how it harmonizes with their subjectivities. While not mutually exclusive with offering reasons for belief, this is not the emphasis.

- Potential Strengths of Experiential/Narrative Apologetics- E/N methodology correctly emphasizes the importance of human desire and imagination. By stressing the importance of the corporate church as a living apologetic, E/N method is recovering an ancient Scriptural

argument. Finally, it is concerned with understanding how living in different cultures shapes people's experiences in life.

- Potential Weaknesses of Experiential/Narrative Apologetics- There are also potential weaknesses in E/N thinking. According to Chatraw and Allen, this method can minimize propositional truths and cognitive appeals. While Scripture is not entirely rational, neither is it devoid of propositions. E/N apologetics can underutilize historical evidence and linear thinking. These can be situationally effective, and therefore shouldn't be thrown away.
- Soft versus Hard Experiential/Narrative Apologetics- An example of soft apologetics (N.T. Wright's book *Simply Christian*) is provided. It argues that there are four basic human experiences connected to Christian belief: quest for spirituality, a longing for justice, a hunger for relationships, and a delight in beauty. All of these are met by the narrative of Scripture and resonate with the deepest subjectivities of the unbeliever. "*Simply Christian* serves as an example of soft E/N apologetics because it focuses – albeit not exclusively – on human experience and the explanatory power of the Christian story" (127).

Reformed epistemology is yet another method of apologetics. It argues that Christian beliefs are properly basic, that is, can be accepted without self-incorrigible evidence. Through the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, one can be warranted in their Christian belief. While traditional proofs are not mutually exclusive with Reformed Epistemology, one is not required to "prove" the faith. Cumulative case apologetics focuses on a matrix of arguments that mutually enforce each other. Rather being used in an independent manner, collections of arguments are preferred.

A Way Forward: There is no, one, universal apologetic methodology. Instead, each of the previous approaches has its own strengths and weaknesses, as soft advocates understand. Since apologetics is inherently a contextual activity, it is encouraged to apply each methodology based on the situation which best demands it.

Wrapping It Up: The purpose of this chapter was to familiarize readers with the broad variety of apologetic approaches. Soft versions of each method are compatible with the book. An apologist should be connected to the corporate body of the church.

Chapter 6: Taking People to the Cross Through the Word

Taking People to the Cross Through the Word: The gospel is essentially to any Christian project, as without this evangelical foundation, such work would cease to be Christian. Debates about methodology are useful and even sometimes necessary but focus too heavily on what distinguishes the approaches. This results in a form of tribalism that forgets what the purpose of apologetics is in the first place. Chapter 6 centers on a defining question: what is the Gospel?

What is the Gospel: 1 Cor. 15 represents of the earliest Christian creedal statements, which summarizes key themes of the gospel as seen in the NT. *The gospel announces who Jesus is.* According to Chatraw and Allen, it declares His identity. He is Christ (“anointed one”), the Son of God. *The gospel announces what Jesus did.* The gospel describes Christ’s work. He fulfills Old Testament prophecy concerning the coming of One who would restore all. Christ died for the sins of the world, redeeming all humanity. He was buried and raised on the third day. It is by the power of the resurrection that all other promises are secured. *“Jesus lived, died, and rose again. These historic events, which occur at the climax of the biblical narrative, are at the center of the message of good news”* (134). *The gospel promises what Jesus secured.* Those who have placed their trust in Christ and repent will one day live with Him in a new community and a new world. *The importance of both fidelity and flexibility in presenting the gospel.* Clarifying the message of the gospel can go a long way towards answering objections. However, these efforts can be inhibited by unfaithfulness to the gospel message and inflexibility. Throughout the New Testament, both Paul and Jesus are adaptable with which aspect of the gospel they emphasize. In many ways, how they presented their message was contextualized to the audience they were speaking to. While NT authors stress the importance of holding to correct content, they are not rigorously formulaic. Based on these points, effective communication of the gospel means understanding the Bible in its native situatedness before applying that message to contemporary times. *The relationship between sharing the gospel and apologetics.* Apologetics and the gospel are not identical categories. Apologetics is designed to removed doubt/obstacles for the unbeliever, and in the process, orient them to gospel. It can also encourage Christians through their struggles. *Arguments and the Holy Spirit.* The Bible is filled with apologetical arguments. A misconception about apologetics is that it ignores or devalues the Holy Spirit. However, most apologists concur that conversion occurs through the Holy Spirit. Apologetics is merely the means through the Spirit can accomplish His work. Persuasion can work with and for the Holy Spirit to bear fruit in the lives of others. The fact that Christian arguments will often be rejected

by the world and that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit for conversion humbles us. An apologetist's best weapon is always prayer.

Taking People to the Cross through Deed: Apologetics is not purely dialogical. Rather, there is an important performative aspect to it as well, our actions. Apologetics should be rooted in the doctrine of the church and observation its implications. "Our apologetic appeals are most faithful when they are embedded within a corporate witness marked by *longsuffering testimony*, *personal transformation*, and *holistic service*" (138). *Longsuffering testimony*. One of the manners which the early church spread the gospel was through how it ministered and responded to others in the face of trials and suffering. One of the distinguishing marks of Christianity was its confidence and compassion in the face of persecution, as demonstrated by Jesus, the Philippians, Paul, the martyrs, etc. By forgiving their executors, instead of loathing them, our forbearers sent a powerful message. They understood better than anyone: "Christ's glory in his resurrection was first achieved through His suffering on the cross" (140). *Apologetics at the Cross* relies not only on the concepts presented by Jesus, but also the corporate church throughout history. It is not through their own willpower that Christians develop long-suffering witness. "As we live in the body of Christ and worship God under the guidance of His Word, it is the Spirit of God who transforms us into apologetists able to persevere in the face of difficulties" (140). *Personal transformation*. As was discussed in the introduction, the manner in which a recipient is addressed has powerful connotations for apologetics. Even great impact is the personal transformation of believers, where the fruit of conversion (love, hope, etc.), can serve as a winsome apologetic. Good apologetics is less having mastered certain intellectual categories and more about the attribution of character virtues. Chief among these is Christian wisdom, which refers to "*the knowledge that embodies the wisdom of the cross and is lived out and cultivated through discipleship within the body of Christ*" (141). This kind of wisdom is only gained through the activities and rituals of the corporate body of Christ. The embodiment of Christian wisdom allows the apologetist to defend three aspects of the gospel: goodness, beauty, and truth. Because of their personal transformation, Christians should both stand and not stand out to others. It is good for Christians to live ordinary lives in the world they mutually share with unbelievers (a quiet excellence). At the same time, our lives should be radical. Having desires and affections oriented to Christ's kingdoms necessarily means Christians lives will look different than worldly culture (cultivation of values, lack of sin, etc.) The dialectic of a countercultural ethic with a quiet excellence leaves an immense impression upon those who witness it. *Holistic service*. Given the stress played on the cognitive aspects of apologetics, it is easy to forget the needs of individuals as well. Apologetists should care for people both emotionally and physically, as well as cerebrally. Given Christ as our appropriate model, like His

ministry, apologetics should be concerned with the whole person. Jesus not only saves spiritually but healed all varieties of sicknesses and bodily trauma. The entire process of salvation involves both body and soul. This same emphasis on holistic personhood should be mirrored in apologetics. “Caring for the hurts, pain, and hunger that people experience is a vital part of defending the faith. Doing so brings into the present the reality of the final healing that will occur in the future” (144). The care that a whole person receives should extend to communities, societies, and institutions. Early Christians placed an emphasis on holistic service, and it formed a powerful apologetic that they utilized.

Conclusion: The gospel is of prime importance, and therefore should ground any attempted apologetic. In fact, the project of apologetics should be thought of as a servant to the gospel. This wholistic pursuit can remove obstacles from an unbeliever while at the same time grounding the Christian. Apologetics should not be thought of as in conflict with the Holy Spirit, but rather the Spirit works through apologetics to complete His purposes. He uses our deeds as well as our words in the process.

Chapter 7: Cruciform Humility Before God and Others

Apologetics at the Cross versus an Apologetic of Glory: When engaging with unbelievers, there is an “apologetics at the cross” and an “apologetic of glory.” The latter is concerned with personal gratification and diminishment of the gospel. The former will engage others with humility, honesty, and confidence – all done in sacrifice and submission. There are two-tiers of humility in apologetics: humility before God and humility before others.

Humility Before God: Submitting to God’s Transcendence: Apologetics must seek to change others because we fear God, it must not change God because we fear others. It must submit to God and accurately portray Him, rather than relying on cheap tricks and binary answers. *The idol of cultural acceptance: ethics.* In the contemporary Western setting, one of the biggest temptations for Christians to modify Biblical ethic into something more world accepting. Typically, self-gratification or personal freedom is posited as the highest good. The alteration of biblical ethics isn’t solely because of culture. In many cases, traditions and dogmas can be the sources of such deviances. The faith of Christianity, when properly serving God, will offend the human cultures around it. Despite this, believers need to hold firm to the biblical text. “A believer cannot seek to be culturally relevant unless he or she first humbly submits to God over and against the idol of cultural acceptance” (149). *Knowledge.* Humanity desires to have

extensive, trending omniscient, knowledge. However, it is important to acknowledge that we are limited creatures, one's who do not have a universal view of the world. There are questions which apologetics cannot answer. At the same time, humanity's finitude is not an excuse for shallow thinking and injudicious acceptance. "A humble acceptance of both our dependence on God and our inability to know truth exhaustively is important for honoring the Lord as we do apologetics" (150). Modernism is a movement which has deeply affected the contemporary psyche. It sought to cast aside past authorities in favor of individual logic and empirical observation. Absolute certainty could be attained through reason alone, as long as someone used proper methods and freed themselves from bias. There are two leftovers of modernism that still have impact today: strong empiricism and unrealistic expectations. *Strong empiricism*. This "stipulates that we should not accept anything as true unless it is empirically verified or demonstrated logically" (152). Given that it is difficult, nigh impossible, to absolutely prove anything with universally accepted evidence, apologists should this tactic. According to Chatraw and Allen, there are several reasons why strong empiricism is problematic. First, it is self-refuting. Its premise cannot be empirically verified or logically demonstrated. Second, it is impractical. There are many things which are obviously true that cannot be proven in a rationalistic manner (ethical norms, etc.). Third, not all intelligent people reason and interpret data in the same way. Fourth, all individuals are born with a fallen sin nature. Sin affects our reasoning structures, suppressing our "native rationality" and sense of the divine. Sin also affects our affections. It misdirects our desires and loves away from God. Sin also affects cultural plausibility structures (communally constructed environment for developing beliefs). *Summarizing the problems with hard empiricism*. Apologists should not rely on strong empiricism. *Unrealistic expectations*. Strong empiricism has unrealistic expectations. The idea that humans can attain a "Gods-eye" view of the world is problematic, because each worldview (including Christianity) faces questions that aren't answerable in unambiguous terms. While Christians and non-Christians many times expect every question to have an answer. This is not the case, as there are many things of God which are beyond human understanding. The book seeks to argue that the Christian worldview has better explanatory power than any other competing worldview. *What do we do with the gaps in the puzzle?* There are many questions in Scripture that do not have a satisfying answer for Westerners. The Bible includes many mysteries which do not have cut-and-dry solutions. Christians are called to accept these paradoxes rather than changing God's Word into something more comfortable. Apologists who do the latter, according to Chatraw and Allen, risk distorting the faith they are attempting to defend (which is a paradox in and of itself!)

Humility Before Others: Loving Your Neighbor: Practically speaking, many apologists can come out rhetorically swinging in conversation, attempting to defeat a person rather than dialogue with them. This approach is non-effective and incompatible with NT humility/love. *Humility and Wisdom: Practical Apologetic Lessons from Proverbs*. The proverbs in Scripture connect humility with wisdom. Wisdom, in this case, is defined as a practical knowledge of living rooted in the fear of God. Apologetics is most effective when employing wisdom, which requires that one assess their context and respond accordingly. There are multiple steps involved in such an action. First, listen and take others seriously. Second, avoid falsely representing the other side(s). Third, resist assuming any of their motives. Fourth, when one can, find common ground or points of agreement to affirm. Fifth, avoid focusing on periphery or unrelated topics. Finally, sixth, avoid being unnecessarily antagonistic, as that is simply off putting.

Conclusion: For Allen and Chatraw, love and humility must not be confused with compromise. Truth must also be proclaimed boldly. All work in apologetics is dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit, therefore submission to Him and God's Word is paramount. Apologists should be humble in their own finitude and non-neutrality, while also attempting to express that finitude to others.

Chapter 8: Appealing to the Whole Person for the Sake of the Gospel

A Holistic Apologetic: As was stated in chapter 6, apologetics should be aimed at the entire human beings. Scripture distinguishes between heart, soul, and mind – all of which should be oriented to loving God. Their interrelation of these three categories suggests that they cannot be easily atomized. Thus, every aspect of human constitution should be addressed when performing apologetics.

What Does This Have to do with Apologetics?: There is an intersection between theological anthropology and apologetics. Three aspects of the former have significant weight on the latter: humans are intellectually reflective, moral beings, and beings that worship. *Intellectually reflective beings*. Chatraw and Allen argue that humans use their intellect when forming personal decisions and commitment. However, they also emphasize that intellect is not the only trait involved in a such a process, as humans hold beliefs for a complex array of reasons. *Moral beings*. God created humanity as moral beings who have standards and make judgements, and are responsible for such. There might not be agreement on a particular model of morality, but this does not eliminate the fact that all humans at least possess moral intuition. *Worshipping beings*. Humans are worshipping beings. Many modern gods (sex, money, etc.) vie for the devotion and service of humanity.

What one loves most inevitably is what they serve. Apologetics needs to be mindful of the idols that appeal to deeply rooted desires.

What's Love Got to Do with It?: In the NT, "heart" is conceived of as the center of a person's whole being, involving aspects thinking, believing, desiring, and imagining. There have been many suggested models which try to map the framework of anthropology. The first views humans as fundamentally thinking beings, as we are constituted by our mind. The second model views people as primarily believing beings, where worldview is pre/supra rational. Finally, the third, and most promising model, conceives of humans as embodied agents of desire or love. As beings designed to love/feel, the objects of our love will order the conventions of our lives. People change not in response to a list of facts, but by altering what they love most. A healthy apologetic will make room for persuasions which address both mind and heart. The volitional human is one who is constituted by thinking, desiring, and believing.

Identity and Purpose: Lessons from Nike and Augustine: There is an analogous relationship between marketers and apologists, as both strive to persuade people into making decisions. Marketers attempt to convince people to buy their product by appealing to desires, not intellect. Marketers "sell an *image* of who they think you would want to be, an *identity* that would seemingly provide fulfillment, or a *vision* of what life could be like... if you purchase their product" (176). While the market should not be entirely mimicked, apologetics should similarly appeal to people as worshippers chasing identity and purpose.

When "Reasons" Aren't Enough: Often, it appears that someone has to want to believe before they will seriously listen to reasons to believe. What makes someone want to believe? In the postmodern (late modern) era, imaginative, moral, and aesthetic appeals will have great impact. This does not preclude rational argumentation, but operates as other needed forms of persuasion. *Stories and imagination.* Chatraw and Allen argue that Scripture is full of diverse encounters where a person appeals to the imagination of another "in order to make a point in a way that will capture their hearts" (178). It does more than present propositional statements and rules. Stories are a basic constituent of worldviews and have a strong effect on how one relates to the environment around them. Because of this fact, narrative can be utilized for subverting others false stories that unbelievers hold, as well as drawing people into a vision of the Christian good life. This can be especially effective when rational evidence is impotent. *Apologetics in corporate faithfulness and communion.* Chapter 6 demonstrated how the corporate faithfulness of the church served as a powerful apologetic. "As holistic human beings, humans are not simply, or even most fundamentally, looking for answers to their lists of questions; they are looking to love and be loved. This is why it is integral that individual Christians be planted

within the church, for it is only in the church that the individual Christian, by communing together with other Christians in love and “proving” the wisdom of Christ by practical corporate demonstrations, can offer an apologetic that demonstrates the love of Christ in a way that no other apologetic can” (181). These corporate practices of the church (worship, baptism, celebration of the Lord's supper, etc.) are visual apologetics for the gospel.

Apologetics, Reasons, and Evidence: Some apologists have taken up the aforementioned methods to such a degree that they have abandoned or minimized evidence-based appeals. Chatraw and Allen disagree with such an idea. *Native rationality versus cultural rationality*. Introduced in chapter 7, native rationality describes universally shared mechanisms responsible for producing basic beliefs. Cultural rationality refers to the cultural frameworks which clarify things considered communally plausible. *Basic logic versus frameworks of rationality*. “Basic logic is what is used in elementary mathematics and in certain assumed rules for communicating and thinking that seem to be universal. Frameworks of rationality (or patterns of rationality) are broader assumed systems of thought linked to specific historical and social locations that people (consciously or unconsciously) operate under, influencing how they make and receive arguments” (183). Some basics of logic are universal/cross-cultural. These include the law of identity ($A=A$), the law of noncontradiction (A is not non- A), and the law of the excluded middle (either A or non- A). These basics of logic are needed for basic communication and persuasion. As such, Chatraw and Allen argue that they “are a *necessary* condition for rationality. At the same time, however, they are not a *sufficient* condition for rationality” (frameworks of rationality) (184). If someone was to deny the basics of logic, they would refute themselves. The authors finish the section by summarizing the points made throughout the chapter.

Conclusion: This chapter emphasized the need to recognize each person we talk to as a holistic being. A combination of evidence-based appeals and appeals involving story, identity, and imagination are preferable for the apologist. Neglecting the former or the latter invite disastrous consequences for apologetics. Multidimensional humans need a multidimensional approach.

Chapter 9: Contextualization Through the Lens of the Cross

Universal Truth and Contextualization: “The gospel message is true for all people and is the standard by which all cultures should be assessed” (186). However, since the gospel was communicated in a specific culture, it needs to be translated

to be understood by other cultures. Scripture is filled with examples of this contextualization.

Paul's Philosophy of Ministry: A prominent example of contextualization is Paul's discourse concerning sacrificial food in 1 Cor. 9:19-23. It provides principles that can be used in support of cross-centered contextualization. First, apologists should take their listener seriously in a consistent manner. Second, the gospel rather than pragmatics sets the limits of and pushes contextualization. Paul's ministry philosophy was to sacrifice comfort and modify his style of living to reach people for Christ while not compromising his theology or morality.

A Survey of the Major Speeches in Acts: NT figures tend to utilize different approaches for different audiences. Chatraw and Allen devote this section to understanding the particular apologetics that apostles offered to different people groups. *Peter's apologetic to the Jews.* At Pentecost, Peter has multiple strategies for reaching his Jewish audience. [1] "Peter establishes that Jesus has ushered in specific scriptural expectations of the Jewish people for events that would occur at the restoration of the kingdom" (189), [2] Peter appeals to authorities relevant to his audience, and [3] Peter uses language that was accepted and understood by his audience. *Paul's apologetic to the Greeks.* When switching to a Greek audience at Areopagus (Acts 17), Paul focuses on building bridges rather than creating arguments. According to the authors, he does this in several manners. First, Paul relates to their culture (belief in supernatural beings, desire to worship, etc.). Second, Paul challenges their culture by subverting aspects of the Athenian's central beliefs. Third, Paul connects his audience to Jesus. *Paul's apologetic to the Romans.* Another example of Paul contextualizing the gospel message is his defense in front of Roman authorities. At the dawn of Christianity, Rome had a negative view of Christianity which Paul had to negate. This often meant standing before Roman authorities. *Paul before Felix – Acts 24:1-26.* In this scenario, Paul responds to each accusation by engaging with the rules of the Roman legal context he found himself in (Romans rules of evidence, etc.). *Paul before Festus – Acts 25:1-12.* Paul makes his defense here by repeating many of elements in his defense to Felix. *Paul before Agrippa 0 Acts 25:23-26:32.* Paul here is speaking to a Jewish leader. Therefore, he utilizes both "judicial rhetoric" his audience would be familiar with and Moses/the prophets. The authors argue that every environment has its own rules of engagement, like the specific scenarios mentioned above. Apologists should tailor their presentation of the gospel's universal truth to their particular audience. When performing apologetics we must not be "me-centered" but others-centered and relate to the culture without compromising the message.

Can't You Smell That? Understanding Culture: The assumptions and attitudes of our situated culture orient and shapes our interactions with the world. It provides

the framework for desiring, believing, and thinking that underlies our subjectivities. These frameworks are not a set of beliefs, but rather the sensed context in which their formation takes place. “As apologists, it is important that we understand how people's assumptions and beliefs are often *historically* and *culturally* conditioned. As we mentioned earlier, *cultural plausibility structures* refers to the beliefs we deem plausible because the people around us support them” (195). A person's cultural framework will impact the way that they interpret and receive evidence, shaping their view on any issue. It is important for apologists to understand cultural plausibility structures and how they differ on the individual and cross-cultural level.

What's Next?: Christians often do not recognize the existence and impact of cultural frameworks belonging to non-Christians. Once realized, these matrixes should be examined and engaged, as opposed to mindlessly bombarding people with evidence. The specific method for performing this task is known as the inside-out method.

Part 3: The Practice of Apologetics at the Cross

Chapter 10: Preparing to Engage (not Spin) in Late Modernism from the *Inside Out*

Looking Back and Picking Up Where We Left Off: The goal of Chapter 10 is to apply all that was learned in the previous chapters to real-life situations and an apologetic method. It discusses how culture has responded to absolute truths throughout three historical shifts, the distrust of modern culture and lead up to this distrust, and the introduction of the inside-out apologetic method.

Three General Historical Shifts: The Road to Late Modernism: Chatraw and Allen argue that for these three periods in Western history, we should not see boundaries as static. History is a complex nuance of activity. *Premodernism*. This era can be defined by its belief in the supernatural, emphasis on community, and respect for traditions/religious institutions. *Modernism*. Questioned many of the things held as authorities by pre-modernism. This philosophical attitude began to turn inward toward the subject and emphasize the power human reason to discern absolute truth. Scientific methods were developed with prolific results. Any result produced through the proper methods could be thought of as absolute truth. Some responses to modernism include a movement toward emotion, nature, aesthetics (Romanticism), the limited nature of raw facts, and the moral failings derived

from it. *Late Modernism* (postmodernism). Chatraw and Allen spend the first part of this section defending their rather pariah terminology of “late modernism” over “postmodernism.” Late modernity still prioritized the “self” and “autonomy,” but critiqued modernity’s notion of the “neutral observer.” Some advocates took this farther than others, to the point of absolutely denying truth. This radical skepticism apparently leads to radical nihilism, or the idea that life is meaningless. Late modernity is best described by the “liberal ironist,” that is, one who simultaneously denounces both violence and truth. While late modernism can be seen as a relief for most Christians, no time period should ever supersede the gospel. *Why in matters*. Late modernism is the cultural plausibility structure that exists today, therefore making it extremely pertinent to study for apologetics.

Two Influential Aspects: Immanent Frame and the Age of the Spinmeister:

- Immanent Frame– Chatraw and Allen define immanent frame as referring to how in the contemporary cultural context people view everything in terms of a natural rather than supernatural order. The modern social imagination presumes that while folk can find significance and meaning in life, the divine is necessary or illusory. “In much of the West, the commonly shared habits, goals, and symbols of day-to-day life and meaning commonly ascribed to it point us to the physical world around us and normally no further” (208). Dissatisfaction with such an idea has led to explosion of spiritual options in the current time. Ultimately, we find ourselves in a secular age, where religious activity is no longer normative and quite contested.
- The Age of the Spinmeister- “The modern world has produced a professional industry of spinning news, press releases, commercials, and marketing campaigns that, on a regular basis, seek to change our perceptions” (209). Truth is not a primary concern, persuasion is. Therefore, the mindset of the modern population has been deeply affected by these tactics, where suspicion is cast on those who try to convince us of things. “In a culture that, in its perpetual spinning to win over people’s trust, ironically breeds *distrust*, it can be hard for the unbeliever, when approached by a Christian, not to feel as though he is the target of a ‘Christian sales job’” (210). Christian apologetics many times can resemble the spinmeister.

There are multiple postures that Christians can take regarding other perspectives. *Option 1: Spin*. “Spin” refers to those who have an overconfident view of the world to such a degree that they couldn’t imagine it being different. Proponents of this posture tend to dismiss those

who disagree with them. Many times, it is a conversation stopper all too easily employed by Christian apologists. *Option 2: Take*. “The second option is to recognize that our view of the world is a *take* and, while embracing a picture of reality and a certain way of inhabiting the world, to acknowledge both the contestability of our view and “the pull and tug” of alternative views” (211). Not all “takes” are created equal.

Apologetics at the Cross Applied: Tone and Contextualization: This short section took the “spinmeister” approach and reformed it into a more ethical, humane way of communicating one’s beliefs without manipulative tactics. Instead of engaging in spinmeister methods, the authors will introduce the alternatives that *Apologetics at the Cross* provides in this chapter.

Engaging From the Inside Out: The authors begin this section with an example that shows the necessity of their approach. “The approach we suggest is what we’ve termed *inside out* – a frame of reference that the Christian can internalize and apply to a wide array of apologetic situations. In line with the others-centered approach we’ve been emphasizing, this approach begins with the apologist entering into the other person’s plausibility structures and engaging them within it. The goal of starting with the other person’s assumptions is to create space so they can consider some of the problems with their own outlook and be willing to consider the plausibility of Christianity” (214). This model insists that the gospel be at the center of apologetics and that the locus of activity is on the points where Christianity overlaps with other people.

There are two diagnostic questions for engaging inside a non-Christian “take.” 1. *What can we affirm and what do we need to challenge*. This involves finding parts of other’s positions that are admirable and the points that are impractical or inconsistent. 2. *Where does it lead?* Another effective method is to trace where a person’s assumptions and beliefs will lead if applied consistently. Non-Christian cultures often contain presuppositions that cast Christianity in a bad light, but their implications ultimately make them overly simplistic and unlivable. Entering other’s cultural frameworks helps one to discern their unique reasoning and challenge it on its own terms (showing it inconsistent and unlivable).

Once inside, the apologist can begin working their way outwards. This can be done via two different diagnostic questions. 1. *Where do competing narratives borrow from the Christian story?* “Having listened carefully to take inventory of what can be affirmed and what needs to be challenged in an unbeliever’s view, we will be positioned to show how the Christian story includes vital resources that, though they may be present in the unbeliever’s framework, are actually borrowed from Christianity, since their framework does not have anything to ground such resources” (218). One way of doing this is Timothy Keller’s “A” and “B”

doctrines. 2. *How does Christianity better address our experiences, observations, and history?* In what ways does “Christianity better ‘capture the rich texture of this life and history?’” (220). The gospel is flexible and multifaceted, meaning that it can be applied in a variety of locations. Chapter 11 will seek to connect this method with many of the aspects of “late modernism.”

Chapter 11: Engaging in Late Modernism

A Constructive Engagement with Late Modernism – This chapter surveyed four aspects of late modernism: Modern pluralism, the ethics of authenticity, religious lethargy, and the therapeutic turn. The inside-out method was used to examine these aspects of late modernism, and after a general analysis, the authors made suggestions regarding future research.

Modern Pluralism: Is an environment where many views (typically religious), coexist together without any since one possessing “taken-for-granted” status. While Pluralism is nothing new, it did not play a prominent role in premodern times due to communal insulation. In the contemporary world, however, things have changed. Globalization and diversification have led to the proliferation of many religions. Some Christian students have found this pluralism challenging and hard to communicate outside of their domestic bubble

- Opportunities- Pluralism, as the name suggests, offers a multitude of opportunities for the church. Challenges that arise around foundational doctrines offer a chance to sharpen and grow these specific areas.. Pluralism forces the church to be more intentional with their faith, developing an internal culture to counter external pressure. It forces Christians away from isolationism, by necessitating engagement with their broader communities. A consequence of pluralism is that individuals are reticent to commit to any singular religious position. This creates a tendency toward theological pluralism (claims all [major] religious traditions describe the same reality and lead their adherents to the same destination. Tolerance of every religious tradition is emphasized) and religious skepticism (rejects all faiths as culturally conditioned human expressions. No religion is true).

Inside. Agree: Christians can agree with theological pluralists in denouncing judgement on other religions simply because they are different. Disagree: (1) Theological pluralism is subtly intolerant (2) Gloss over distinctions between religions as if they were not significant (3) Propounded inclusivism is really disguised exclusivism. Agreeance with religious skepticism: All people are historically conditioned, to the degree that they are impacted by their situated cultural frameworks. Disagree: (1)

Religious skepticism is a conditioned response (2) Cultural context not ultimately decisive in beliefs.

Outside. “In sum, just like any group that gathers around a common interest or belief, Christianity is exclusive (even groups that gather around a belief in tolerance embrace a form of exclusivism), but Christianity has also proven to be remarkably inclusive in the way it embraces all kinds of people, no matter what culture, country, or socio-economic background they may be from” (228)

The Ethics of Authenticity: Widespread in Western culture is the idea of expressive individualism, “the belief ‘that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized’” (228). This rejection of external norms and the need turn inward for authentic self-expression is reinforced by marketing strategies and institutions. This campaigns result in self-authorizing morality, which holds personal choice as the highest good. Religion, with the call to submit to something beyond the individual, is seen as oppressive and dangerous.

- Opportunities- We should be grateful for freedom of choice. Self-definition is ultimately unstable when brought to its logical end. Feelings are in a constant flux, and individuals is constantly undergoing a process of cultural cultivation. Three categories will be discussed to this end: identity, justice, and community.
- Identity- *Inside.* Everyone finds themselves searching for their self-worth. Inevitably, we turn to external cultural sources for affirmation, as “they provide deeply embedded, living pictures we strive to emulate in order to be validated” (231). All people base their identity on something, and when that is taken away, we feel robbed of our true selves. Empty, nameless, and insignificant. *Outside.* Idolatry is the root cause of despair derived from identity loss. Christianity solves this crisis by inviting people to invest their whole selves in eternal and meaningful realities.
- Justice- *Inside.* Late moderns have a strong sense of active justice concerning human dignity and universal benevolence. Christians can affirm both of these categories. However, the late modern lacks sufficient grounding, motivation, and hope for these beliefs. *Outside.* Christianity offers not only the grounding and motivation needed for us to seek justice, but also a reassuring hope that justice will ultimately be performed.
- Community- *Inside.* Humans are relational beings who long for community and fellowship. Expressive individualism corrodes such an

idea by making relationships an object for personal happiness. Pride when manifested through individualism also leads to jealousy. *Outside*. “Christianity, in offering a vision for life and true friendship, has the resources to cultivate thriving relationships and flourishing communities” (237). The innate desire for relationships points to the fact that God is an inherently relational being.

Religious Lethargy: Many people already find significance in the world they live in, due to digesting a cultural narrative which excludes the divine. They give a priority to the pursuit of worldly things, and don't feel that they are missing anything that Christianity offers to their lives.

- Opportunities- An apathy towards Christianity is an increasing problem, but there are still vulnerable points as a result from a life without transcendence. There is a sense of something further than the immediate context which haunts them.
- The Everyday Stuff- *Inside*. In the everyday experiences of existence, a sense of meaning and purpose is ubiquitous. Views which try to create self-sufficient meaning ultimately cannot be logical/experientially consistent, as their webs of meaning are inevitably frail. *Outside*. Christianity explains the above desires through the imago dei and telic nature of Christ.
- Beauty- *Inside*. There is a ubiquitous appreciation for beauty, whether consciously admitted or not. Relativistic or naturalistic explanations for why humans recognize and experience beauty are insufficient. *Outside*. Beauty is rooted in the nature of God Himself. Creation is an expression of the beauty, and God made humans with the capacity to understand and produce this concept. Materialists struggle to account for beauty.
- The Good Life- *Inside*. Even when constructing their own personal narratives, people are oriented towards hopes of finding happiness and fulfillment. Yet, that desired happiness is always so fleeting. Every natural desire has an object in this world toward which it is aimed. If there are desires which no natural happiness can fulfill, this suggests something which is beyond material existence. *Outside*. Christianity explains these desires by arguing that humans were made for something much greater than their immediate circumstance. This life is a foretaste of another, where fellowship with Christ leads to eternal satisfaction.
- Death- *Inside*. The terror of death is seemingly all-pervasive. Yet, many people cope with this proposition by minimizing and/or ignoring death. By sympathetically getting someone to consider their inevitable

termination, the existential weight can create opportunities for the apologist. *Outside*. Death forces people to reckon with the idea of God. Through Christ's resurrection, the end of life is merely a transition to deeper community, existence, and love. Christianity is something that the unbeliever should want to be true, and therefore is relevant to them.

The Therapeutic Turn: As opposed to previous era's, "the main core value of society will be happiness, and thus the religious person, who was 'born to be saved,' will be overshadowed by the psychological person, who is 'born to be pleased'" (245). Traditional religion operates as form of existential gaslighting, constraining individualism and instigating feelings of guilt. Despite the turn against religious thought, the church has strangely also adopted a view of God as a divine pleaser. Christianity has "a central idea... that because of sin and the fall... which have marred both human nature and the natural world, humans will never be able to be perfectly happy in this life" (246).

- Opportunities
 - A High View of Human Dignity- *Inside*. Late modernism places a high value on human dignity. It replaces the concept of sin with sickness, which creates an incapacitated being who needs to be manipulated back to health (Chatraw and Allen argue that this is a more degrading view of what a human being is). *Outside*. As God's image bearers, humans are not determined products. They possess dignity and meaning bequeathed to them by God. It is within the concept Christian care that the motivation to combat sickness can be found.
 - Sin as Idolatry- *Inside*. Therapeutic culture is apathetic to the magnitude and reality of sin. Attempting to communicate human fallenness via disobedience to OT law is many times unhelpful. Despite this, there is a feeling of unease and anxiety concerning the achievement and performances that people have in this world. Such emotions can be a launching board for a discussion concerning sin. *Outside*. "It is often when someone is feeling the all too common existential weight of discontentment and sadness that there is an apologetic opening to introduce the concept of idolatry-one of the main ways both the Old and New Testaments describe sin" (249). This is the beginning of helping the late modern understand the human condition.

Looking Back and Ahead: Chapter 11 charted some initial trajectories that can be used to appeal and respond to late moderns. This is not a rigid system to be utilized without exception. Many conversations are fluid, and the method presented should change with the context. Christianity will always seem crazy to a world that is foreign to it. Working inside other people's frameworks out to Christianity is an effective way to perpetuate the gospel. This will raise very specific questions, which will be ruminated on in chapter 12.

Chapter 12: Dealing with Defeaters

This chapter presents multiple defeaters to Christianity. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list, nor should it be thought of as a thorough examination of these questions.

Defeater #1: “Christianity is too restrictive. It denies people the opportunity to flourish by following their heart.”: Many people view God as a cosmic “killjoy” because of the rules and regulations that are associated with being Godly. The paradox of this reality is that everyone is enslaved to something. Following expressive individualism corrodes relationships, is impractical, and promises a freedom that is not deliverable because it enslaves one to themselves. The heart of the gospel is not to follow a set of rules, but to flourish in the life that we have been given. True flourishing in this life, is to be found in submission to the only master who sets all people free. The life lived in submission to Jesus’ teachings produces freedom from within and provokes change without because it is a life laid down for one’s fellow human.

Defeater #2: “The Christian sexual ethic is dehumanizing, and Christians are homophobic.”: Christians recognize the beauty of God's design for sex within marriage between male and female. They lovingly submit out of conviction, not out of spite, to maintain loyalty to their First Love which is intimate relationship with God. Chatraw and Allen state that “...we cannot trust our own ‘feelings’ and ‘urges,’ or even ‘the way we are wired,’ to lead us to the good life, a life where we know our Creator and live out our true meaning and purpose. Jesus calls us to say no to ourselves and yes to him, trusting that his way is better than ours. Even if following Jesus makes us feel like we are dying, in the end, it is actually the only way we can truly live” (260).

Defeater #3: “Christians are a bunch of hypocrites; this includes many of the individuals I meet today and the way the church has collectively mistreated people through history.”: Throughout history, Christians have demonstrated

significant moral shortcomings that contradict with their deepest tenants. This is why apologetics should emphasize word and deed. Three points can be made in response to the above defeater: (1) Just because someone who claims to be a Christian does something bad doesn't mean Christianity is bad (2) According to Christian theology, individual growth takes place over time (3) Sometimes people convert to Christianity out of abusive or other unstable, dysfunctional situations. The church has had many failings in the past, especially as it relates to slavery and segregation. These have resulted in much pain, and potentially false narratives about Christianity that should be addressed. (1) Scripture does not contain a pro-slavery theology. A robust concept of the imago dei does not allow for chattel slavery. (2) Motivations to end segregation were based on themes found in the OT and NT.

Defeater #4: "Faith, in contrast to reason and science, is for people who believe things without any evidence. It is long past time that we move beyond old myths about the supernatural and the divine and seek to discover truth using reason and empirical observation.": This argument is a kind of coming-of-age story, albeit one that is built on mistaken assumptions. It is not possible to adopt a theory for discovering truth that does not rely on faith of some kind. Imagination, intuition, and historical circumstance are involved in the enterprise known as science. Scientism (or a view that subtracts all extraneous beliefs beside materialism) undercuts itself. "While modern science has given us access to important knowledge about the world, the scientific method(s) cannot prove or even explain a wide range of knowledge and experience that nearly everyone would agree we are fully justified in taking to be true" (267). "*Unbelievers should not inconsistently demand a standard of proof for God that could never be applied to some of their most basic commitments*" (268). Biblical faith is also not a blind faith that is incongruent with science and divorced from reason.

Defeater #5: "I can't believe in God because there is so much evil and suffering in the world.": Suffering and evil are an unfortunate reality people have to experience in this world, and are phenomena that deeply challenge Christianity. There are two different problems of evil: the logical one (there is a contradiction between God and evil) and experiential one (how people understand and deal with bad things in their life). The latter problem has elicited many responses from the non-Christian (evil as an illusion, secular pessimistic view, etc.). Ultimately, Christianity argues that suffering and death should not be sought after or avoided. Pain is an indication that the world is not as it should be. Christ is redeeming this fallen world and ushering in eternal peace. This is a special kind of hope that allows for sacrifice and the opposition of evil. Allen and Chatraw argue that the logical problem of evil has multiple answers: (1) Secularists have no clear basis from which to judge something as good or evil (2) Christian theology

acknowledges mystery, which include God's response to evil, and (3) The cross is God's response to evil and suffering.

Defeater #6: "I can't believe in a God of judgment and wrath.": Can you believe in a God who forgives? For those who struggle with the idea of judgement, this is a good initial question to ask. The anthropocentric turn of late modernism has critiqued the idea of a judging God, rather than orienting itself to the culpability of a finite and imperfect human. However, "God's judgement flows out of both his holiness and his love; it is part of his settled and active opposition against anything that opposes the good" (281). Forgiveness is a popular sentiment in late modernity; however, it cannot be properly realized in a highly individualized culture. As Chatraw and Allen argue "Christianity not only provides a substantive foundation for forgiveness, but also gives us the assurance that justice will be done in the end, which frees us up to live lives of peace" (282).

Defeater #7: "The Bible is unreliable and cannot be taken seriously.": Chatraw and Allen argue that this is a massive topic, one that cannot be easily consolidated into a small section. For that reason, they will only be discussing reliability as related to the NT gospels (especially since a case for the reliability of the entire Bible can be built off their veracity). *Objection: The gospels altered folk literature.* Response: "...the gospels were written too soon after the gospel events happened – eyewitnesses to Jesus' life were still alive and prominent in the church – to be myths" (285). *Objection: The gospels are a hoax.* Response: the gospels are too counterintuitive to be a hoax. (1) The disciples, leaders of the early Christian movement, are mostly cast in a negative light. (2) Some of the main eyewitnesses for Jesus's resurrection are women, who in that time were not seen as trustworthy sources. (3) The gospels also contain many differences between that are not smoothed out. Each of these above items are not things we would expect if a group of people were attempting to create a movement (as they are embarrassing or against common sense).

Defeater #8: "The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is confusing and illogical.": For many people, the Trinity is an irrational, insurmountable paradox. If working within the confines of hard Enlightenment rationality, this certainly would be the case. Within the confines of Christian theology, however, the Trinity is an illuminating force that makes sense (this is similar to how quantum theory is counterintuitive to classical physics, yet quantum physicists find it to be intuitive). The doctrine of the Trinity grounds our understanding of love and relationships in God's being. His very essence is communal love, which impacts the constitution of the world. This trait also ontologically distinguishes Him from other theistic deities and contrasts with materialistic notions of love. "In a world created by the Triune God, love is at the very center of reality" (289).

Moving Beyond Defeaters: These common objections are not the only challenges leveled against Christianity. However, Chapter 12 provides flexible trajectories for answering such critiques. A model demonstrating a positive case for Christianity will be presented in Chapter 13.

Chapter 13: Making a Case

A Widening of the Apologetic Enterprise : Apologetics is a holistic approach that involves emotional appeals as well as cognitive arguments. Christians must engage with nonbelievers on an experiential and framework level. The church is a living apologetic as well as the formative environment in which apologetic arguments are supported as plausible. A vision for a multidimensional approach to apologetics is as such: “(1) live out an apologetic that undermines misconceptions of Christianity and embodies a more compelling and beatific vision of life... (2) help others see the problems with their own backgrounds and frameworks that cause them to approach Christianity as implausible... (3) offer intelligent responses to objections and reasons for committing to Christ” (292). Chapter 13 will present a positive case for Christianity utilizing the techniques described in previous chapters.

Signposts: There are strong arguments and reasons to believe that Christianity is the best explanation of reality that cannot be directly proven but point to (like a signpost) the truth. Other worldviews fail to offer as robust reasoning as Christianity to major life questions and observations.

- *Why Can We Make Sense of the Universe?* There is an alignment between our minds and the world around us. While certainly not a proof for Christianity, this religion enjoys having better explanatory power than its secular alternatives (evolution confers faculties for survival, not the discernment of truth. On the other hand, Christianity holds that people were created in the image of God with the ability to understand His creation).
- *Why Is It That the Universe Seems Fine-Tuned for Life?* It is vastly improbable that a universe with the capacity for life could emerge by chance. This is because its complex features would have to be precisely arranged in order to sustain life. While “not rationally coercive, the fine-tuning of the universe remains a signpost for a fine-tuner and fits well with the Christian belief in God as the Creator” (297).

- *What Makes Best Sense of the Consensus That the Universe Had a Beginning?* Consensus indicates that the universe had a beginning. Most alternative explanations for this fact lead to either infinite regress or the generation of something from nothing. Since everything that begins to exist has a cause, it is reasonable to think that the universe had a cause. This aligns well with Christianity's story of the world.
- *How Can Moral Realism Be Grounded?*
 - Morality as Irresistible – Even if one denies that morality exists independently of our perception or feelings, people discover that moral judgements are inevitable in practice.
 - Grounding Morality in Culture? Morality cannot be grounded in culture without justifying abominable actions in other cultures.
 - Grounding Morality in Science? Science is helpful in describing certain physical aspects of morality. It, however, cannot explain the phenomenon of moral obligation or things like value, duty, and rights.
 - Grounding Morality in God – While moral grounding could be used to support other forms of theism, “Looking to a transcendent, personal, and good agent beyond this world as the one who has designed the world and gives ultimate meaning to our lives is the simplest and most coherent explanation for the full range of moral truths” (302).
- *What is the Best Explanation for the Numerous Eyewitness Accounts of Miracles?* Throughout history there have been many testimonies to miracles, often made by intelligent and reputable persons. Many naturalistic attempts have presented epistemic and ontological challenges to the status of miracles. However, they cannot account for the eyewitness testimony to a massive number of miracles. A better take on these supernatural occurrences is that they are pointers to a reality beyond our realm. This is extremely congruent with the Christian idea of God and the nature of miracles.

The Greatest Story Ever Told: The story of the gospel provides beautiful answers to the human heart's greatest questions and longings. The themes of the gospel naturally draw people in because of their profound and life-changing effects.

- *Who Are We?* “We are made by God in his image in the world God created for us, which means we have inherent value, meaning, and purpose. We were designed to live in right relationship to God, devoted to him and enjoying and stewarding his good gift of creation” (307). Humans are equal and redeemed by Christ, who is the fullest picture of humanity.

- What Is the Problem with the World, and What Is Its Solution? There is a universal intuition that things are not as they should be. Religion itself is not the root cause of wrongness in the world, but humans. The solution to this problem “is that God, as a loving Father, has acted. He has not sat on the sidelines, simply to condemn creation or leave it to spiral into death and misery. God has entered the world, in the person of Jesus Christ, to absorb the cost of rebellion and to destroy evil to make this world right. His Spirit resides in those who turn from their self-absorption and pledge allegiance to their rightful Lord, in order to live eternally in right relation to God and the creation he is redeeming” (309).
- Where Are We Going? In Christianity, death is not an unrepeatable end but a doorway to a new existence. Christ’s resurrection ensures that believer is offered eternal relationship with others and God. This is a beautiful story suggested by many of the signposts given in the chapter thus far.

Jesus’ Death and Resurrection: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is well supported and provides many reasons to suggest that it is true. The substantial evidence for the resurrection of Jesus overpowers the skeptical claims against its credibility.

- The Story of Jesus’ Resurrection Would Have Been Too Counterintuitive to Simply Be Made Up
 - *An Unexpected Death* Christ’s death via crucifixion was unexpected and flew in the face of all assumptions for the Messiah at that time. No one expected the long-awaited Jewish King to die a dishonorable death on the cross.
 - *A Counterintuitive Claim: Resurrection* The resurrection of Jesus was an unpopular notion with first-century Jews and Greeks – hence not the best material to start a religious movement. Non-Jewish views found a resurrection to be impossible, while Jews believed in an eschatological resurrection (generally).
 - *Counterintuitive Witnesses* Women are the primary eyewitnesses for Christ. This was counterintuitive in that era, given female testimony was considered unreliable.
- More Than Five Hundred People Saw the Resurrected Jesus, and Some of Them Were Skeptical Prior to What They Witnessed
 - *Multiple Appearances* Paul, Peter, James, and more than five hundred people claimed to have seen the risen Christ. Hallucination theory does not explain the sheer number of witnesses to Christ. The dead body of Jesus was not produced by the authorities.

- *No Body Was Produced* It is counterintuitive for a resurrection claim to be made in Jerusalem, where the authorities simply could have hoisted Christ's dead body. Instead, the narrative produced by Jewish leaders was that the disciples stole the remains.
- The Early Disciples Would Have Had Little to Gain and Much to Lose by Advocating for an Unpopular Story, SO What Was Their Motive?
 - *Dying for Your Own Lie?* Early Christians were persecuted for their beliefs, which included death. While people throughout history have died for their convictions, it is difficult to see the disciples dying horrible deaths for something they knew to be false.
 - *A Radical Transformation* The authors quote Craig Blomberg, who says: “how a small band of defeated followers of Jesus were transformed overnight into bold witnesses, risking death by proclaiming his bodily resurrection before many of the same people who fifty days earlier had participated in his crucifixion” (316) It is highly unlikely the disciples made their claim up, given the fact that there was no clear precedent to form this idea.

Worshipping a Man: A Jewish Paradigm Shift That Happened Too Fast: The credibility of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection are supported by the rapid and drastic change in Jewish ideology. They went from worshipping Yahweh to worshipping Jesus. No traditional Jewish man or woman would have considered worshipping a man unless his claims to be God were true.

Conclusion: “Apologetics should start with the conviction that ‘Christian [apologetics] must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise it could not be *Christian* [apologetics].’ The gospel is both the goal and the lens through which the apologetic task is approached. The gospel spurs us on to put others before ourselves; hence, the importance of an others-centered and holistic apologetic approach. This book has not presented every possible apologetic argument or question, but has rather introduced guiding emphases and modeled an approach that is flexible enough to adapt to any situation...While apologetics should be contextual, it should also be formed out of the right context. A healthy church remains central to a healthy apologetic. Cruciform lives, functioning as apologetic portraits to the world around us, are not ultimately or primarily cultivated by... reading books like this... These are helps, but the church remains central to the formation of an apologist of the cross. The wisdom of the cross, so central in drawing the right apologetic map for the right situation, grows within the rich soil

of God's people singing, reading, feasting, praying, and confessing around God's Word" (318).