

Liberty University

LIVING A BETTER STORY:
THE LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETIC IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

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ABSTRACT

Is it possible to articulate an apologetic practice from the account of Luke-Acts, which is not among the current popular Christian apologetic practices within contemporary apologetic scholarship?¹ Can one consider the narratives in this history of Acts as a description of apologetic methodology, a sort of a first Christian apologetic practice demonstrated by Jesus and then replicated by His disciples?² The answer is yes. The historical work of Luke offers an early apologetic practice in which the story of Scripture, the narrative of God, witnessed incarnationally through the life of Jesus and continued by the early church. Like Scripture, the concept of lived narrative demonstrates the capacity to create plausibility structures for non-Christians to become Jesus' followers as they enter a new story/narrative to live. The church's lived narrative was an apology and invitation to allow His story to explain life better.

¹ Hindson, Edward E., Caner, Ergun Mehmet.; *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* Account:liberty.main.ehost. Types of Apologetics. In this entry, the journal suggests that some significant apologetic practices function from specific standards of effectiveness. These major practices are Classical Apologetics, Evidential Apologetics, Historical Apologetics, Presuppositional Apologetics, Experiential Apologetics, and New Forms of Apologetics. According to the article, what is suggested in this project would fall in the category of New Forms. The article takes for granted that what will be argued as Lived Narrative Apologetics is "new." This project will assume that it is a first model of Christian apologetics practiced by Jesus and then made more nuanced by the disciples, from which all other models will have grounding.

²Allister E. McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics: Sharing the Relevance, Joy, and Wonder of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 8. Alister McGrath suggests that "narrative apologetics is best seen as supplementing other approaches, reflecting the rich and deeply satisfying nature of the Christian gospel itself. It is one apologetic resource, among others. Yet it is an approach that is, in some ways, fun, particularly winsome and welcoming, including those who find more clinically rational approaches to apologetics to lack imaginative depth and emotional intelligence." McGrath is correct in his assessment of the winsome nature of narrative as apologetic, but his position of narrative being a supplement is lacking. Though it is agreed that a narrative approach to Christian apologetics does not displace other approaches, it is contended that a "Lived Narrative Apologetic" is foundational for different approaches as one embraces the story of redemptive history as "the story" above all others, and one that makes sense of one's questionable life narrative. Jesus came to reveal this narrative (Jn. 1:14; Mt. 1:21; Luke 19:10), and all the scriptural narratives point to his example as God's intention for creation (Luke 24:44-49).

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics and evangelism, when seen through the lenses of the redemptive-historical narrative, make up two edges of the same sword. A sword used by God, demonstrated by Jesus, and persistent through the church as they introduce a story that better explains humanity's story. In Luke's two-volume work, Jesus depicts a living apology that challenges the world He lives within, clarifying the story of God and drawing the watcher into an abundant life that makes sense of life through the wisdom of God made flesh in His *doing* and *teaching*.¹ Acts records the dual occurrence of apologetics and evangelism functioning in harmony as the renewal plan of God is made manifest before a watching world. Jesus' acts are continued through the church as Christianity missionally moves through the world. Those who live the narrative tell the story of heaven to a watching world, a reading world, thereby marrying apologetics and evangelism and rescripting a lesser narrative for "life in abundance."²

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The essential purpose of this study is to offer a unique articulation of Christian apologetics by the church's practice of living a better story. Lived Narrative Apologetics, demonstrated from the historical work of Luke in Acts, argues that Christ, through the church, presents the world with the means to live a superior narrative for existence. How

¹ See Acts 1:1.

² See Jn. 10:10; Jn. 1:12; Jn. 3:14-17.

does the record of Luke-Acts realize this aim? One answer is that Lived Narrative Apologetics offers a unique pairing of apologetics and evangelism through the book of Acts. The church's history in Acts records the first model of Christian apologetics demonstrated by Jesus in the church. Jesus' union with the church mysteriously allows the church to continue what He lived and did in His earthly ministry. Therefore, it is contended that Jesus lived out of a greater narrative, that his life was a living apology that challenged his world, clarified misunderstandings about the One God, and communicated the story of God to the reader, so the reader could choose to take their place in a narrative that offered a superior life.

This project will trace Jesus and his disciples' practice of Lived Narrative Apologetics and the model's methodology. The analysis intends to appreciate a theology of apologetics in the book of Luke-Acts. Apologetics is prevalent in thought and practice in the New Testament. However, Luke's two-volume work allows the reader to appreciate a unique "Lived Narrative" with an apologetic and evangelistic underpinning visible in Jesus and replicated in the church's mission efforts.

It will be further contended that the use of narrative/story is both the redemptive revelation of God shared in the story of Scripture and one in which Jesus was fully aware that He lived.³ This project communicates that Jesus lived to make God's aim known to those who lived in lesser narratives/stories. This project will note the interconnection of apologetics and evangelism, maintaining that the inter-relation is organic and nuanced, based

³ See Luke 24:44-49.

on the situatedness of the person. Consequently, in Luke-Acts, apologetics is person-centered while being missional in its practices. It is important to note that this project suggests it is a first of its kind, as the research on Lived Narrative Apologetics as a specific term does not appear in current research. Narrative theology and narrative apologetics are branches of study that use narrative to discuss and understand the nature of God, faith, and religious experience. Likewise, apologetics is the religious discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse, significant in many religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Lived Narrative Apologetics, especially as defined in this project, does not currently have a significant body of research to counter or contrast. This project contributes a new vantage point to consider Christian apologetics and evangelism.

OBJECTIVES

This research will show that Lived Narrative Apologetics addresses not only the intellect but also the imagination. It maintains that disciples ‘incarnationally’ demonstrate the wisdom of Christian truths through lives directed by the source of wisdom (the redemptive narrative of God in Scripture). In contrast, disciples become and establish a community for the world to read the Christian faith.

Lived Narrative Apologetics defends the distinctive truths of the Christian faith by drawing on its distinctive theological resources (i.e., doctrines) to direct disciples to embody ways of speaking, relating, and living that is itself a kind of defense of the faith, not least by creating a lived plausibility structure (i.e., the church.). This community of living apologies

creates the space for the seeker to determine the reasonableness of one's worldview in contrast and contest with the Christian faith.⁴

To some extent, Lived Narrative Apologetics is a reinvigoration of Christian culture, both the idea and the practice. The church (the aggregate of disciples) participating in the story of God for redemption, the gospel, and the mission of Jesus helps change the picture that currently captivates the imagination of Christians and non-Christians as it addresses both reason and imagination.⁵ The current culture and its prevailing elements that lead to captivity is a war cry for the church to live out the reality of what it knows about Christ. The church must live the story that makes sense of every other story.

⁴ See Luke 18:35-19:10; Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 17, 22-28.

⁵ Vanhoozer would argue this is the "drama of redemption." The drama of redemption is discussed later in the project.

CHAPTER ONE

A BOOK REVIEW OF SEMINAL TEXTS

The goal and scope of chapter one is to consider the seminal texts that have influenced the project. The books and authors will be explored through this chapter to determine the similarities and differences that make up the formulation of what Lived Narrative Apologetics aims to present. The authors under consideration have influenced the contours of Lived Narrative Apologetics through their projects, leading to ideas that have accentuated and informed the features that make up this unique apologetic practice. Though the authors themselves may not all have been presenting apologetic works, because their projects are a practice or an apologetic that is unique, they have offered principles that are the seedbed for the anatomy of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to engage with each of the contributing authors to determine how Lived Narrative Apologetics is influenced by the various projects of these authors with similarities and differences. The differences do not place this project in opposition or negation of the authors under consideration. However, it celebrates the uniqueness of each work as a contribution to the proposition of Lived Narrative Apologetics. This project is working within the tradition of the contributing authors.¹ However, this project hopes to emphasize apologetics, evangelism, and discipleship, including God's dynamic presence in the church and the disciples' perspective for living as God's apology to a watching world.

¹ N. T. Wright, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Joshua Chatraw, Trevin Wax, and Alister McGrath have all influenced the formation of what this project hopes to contribute to our tradition.

DEFINING LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS

Before considering the seminal texts, this chapter will include a brief overview of the intention of Lived Narrative Apologetics to better appreciate the engagement with the authors' work under consideration. Accordingly, a brief summation of Lived Narrative Apologetics will be offered here, with some essential features developed through the project.²

Lived Narrative Apologetics offers a people-forming act that synthesizes discipleship and Christian apologetics in a relationally dynamic, adaptively hospitable context, which deepens the discipleship process while shaping the epistemology of those it engages, allowing the Christian worldview to be a living, breathing apology, which reads the culture (its inconsistencies and similarities, strengths and weaknesses) and is read by the culture (through intimate engagements, questions and validation of a value's grounding). Additionally, Lived Narrative Apologetics is the awareness and actualization that one is called into the narrative of God and is living out their place in history through the dynamic interplay of one's personal story and the renewal narrative of God, which has the imaginative capacity to re-story another.³

In summation, Lived Narrative Apologetics is a people-forming, disciple-making apologetic act, which is actualized through disciples who function from awareness of their place in God's story, yet with their story. These disciples know their lived narratives' capacity to intrude into another's narrative for the better. This practice, Lived Narrative Apologetics, has the imaginative power to engage and change another person's story. There is an intentionality in Lived Narrative Apologetics that the disciple will ultimately be able to transfer their story, challenge others' perspectives, and splinter another person's narrative by the wisdom in which their discipleship lives before the watching world.⁴ In other words, when disciples of Jesus

² Greater attention will be given to the definition and application later in the third and fourth chapter.

³ This is a working definition of Lived Narrative Apologetics. The definition of Lived Narrative Apologetics is specially treated in chapter three of this project.

⁴ Emphasis is placed on awareness.

practice Lived Narrative Apologetics, the goal is that one becomes Jesus, “a little Christ,”⁵ who is God’s perfect example of wisdom (see 1 Corinthians 1:30). This wisdom, made manifest, is the evidence of a fully formed disciple (Ephesians 4:1-15), equally presuming that one grows into it.⁶ Lived Narrative Apologetics will argue that just as one can grow into an awareness of the narrative, one also grows into how it is actualized; consequently, one grows in their ability to step into God’s story with their story renovated by His narrative⁷ and then engage another’s narrative.⁸

Lived Narrative Apologetics will contend that it is more than finding a way to have a conversation or navigating effectively within a conversation; rather, it is the disciple’s total life, which includes conversation and so much more. Lived Narrative Apologetics is not exclusively making a defense with the correct character and temperament. Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that one lives under the awareness that one’s life is a prophetic extension of the Story of God, that every part of what one does is work, alive, within the plan of God, the intention of God, the

⁵ “Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.” From C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: NY, Harper One Publishers, 1952), 177.

⁶ See Luke 2:42, 52; 4:16- 21; 24:44- 49. These passages illustrate Jesus’ progression into God’s wisdom through progressive familiarity and actualization of the narrative. One could argue that the disciples also grew (or experienced progressive familiarity) in the narrative, in discipleship by Jesus, and in the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Jesus as promised. See John 14:14-16, 26; 15, 26; 16: 7-14. The Holy Spirit would continue maturing the Apostles in the story by facilitating remembrance awareness and speaking to them in the ministry moments as they lived their narrative calling out.

⁷ Throughout this project, narrative and story are used interchangeably to indicate the renewal project of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The Greater Narrative will be further developed in chapter two of this project. In chapter two, N. T. Wright’s work will serve as the basis for a taxonomy to appreciate The Greater Narrative from which all other stories derive. Also, work will be done to explain the place of the church and all Christians for the time, or “Act” (as Wright describes it) they are in.

⁸ This will be further developed in chapter two of this project, The Greater Narrative.

purpose of the story.⁹ Note that ‘awareness’ means one is conscious of the reality they are called into by God: an ongoing mission to renew a fallen world, “God's renewal project.”¹⁰ (See the later discussion from N. T. Wright’s *The New Testament and the People of God*). The story of God calls the disciple to the ongoing story of God to use their lives as a story (see later development from James K. A. Smith’s *Imagining the Kingdom*, C. S. Lewis’s *Weight of Glory*) to affect others through the same imaginative power that is innate in all stories. This awareness fosters confidence, like Jesus and Paul, that every aspect of living is a part of God's “final act.” (Again, see N.T. Wright's discussion in chapter two). The narrative is a living story and offers the watching world heaven’s apology.

Lived Narrative Apologetics also argues that Jesus was the first apology. Jesus made known the fullness of God through His existence.¹¹ Also, Jesus was The Good News walking the earth¹² and commands the preaching of The Good News to every creature worldwide.¹³ With these two aspects in harmony, heaven offers humanity two things. First, it clarifies who God is, what His word means, and the meaning of Messiah through the person of Jesus. Second, it

⁹On this point, it will be argued that Lived Narrative Apologetics differs from Kevin J. Vanhoozer’s project. In his work on “Sapiential Apologetics,” Vanhoozer contends that sapiential wisdom is living and understanding in a complementary way to God.

This project will also differentiate from Joshua Chatraw’s work in *Telling a Better Story* in that we are not living in a manner that is a pairing of apologetics and evangelism that looks for the most nimble and Christlike way to have the conversation. Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees that the discussion must be had and that one’s character is essential. Still, it goes further to contend that the disciple must see themselves as story, in the story, and actualizing the change of another’s story. This encounter occurs as one lives the narrative. Chapter one will offer a more distinct definition and summation, especially in conclusion.

¹⁰ N. T. Wright, “How to Get Back on Track,” In *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, 115-142. (United States: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013).

¹¹ See John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15; 2:8-10; Hebrews 1:1-3.

¹² See Luke 4:18-21; Luke 16:16; John 1:16-18; Titus 2:11; 3:4-7.

¹³ See Mathew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; John 17:20-23; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8; Galatians 1:6-ff.; Romans 6:16-18.

invites the creature to enjoy abundant living. The Creator loves the creature, and through Jesus, the divine being presents the means of living the best version of their lives possible. In other words, Jesus simultaneously brings the first display of Christian apologetics and evangelism into the human condition. Accordingly, this project holds that Jesus' life is a first apologetic model. Additionally, it follows that a disciple of Jesus is also an argument for God, and the disciple's life is living in authenticity (as a disciple of Jesus) when it is accomplishing the mission of God.¹⁴

Jesus intruded into and is intruding into the current story of the world,¹⁵ making a case that the story He brings is superior to the one lived by those who do not know it.¹⁶ I. Howard Marshall, in *The Gospel of Luke*, indicates that this is the purpose of Luke-Acts. He says, “[Luke] wrote for people at some remove from the ministry of Jesus, both in geography and in time, and his task was to provide them with such an account of the story of Jesus as would enable them to see the story with which they had already become partially acquainted was a reliable basis for their faith.”¹⁷ Lived Narrative Apologetics is apologetics reimagined: the life of Jesus and His followers that present the narrative of God as being fulfilled before the watching world. To this notion, Marshall further adds that Luke “presents the story of Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy and indeed as being determined throughout the will of God revealed in prophecy. The ministry is the period of fulfillment in which God's promises of salvation are realized.”¹⁸ Was

¹⁴ This mission takes up the twofold agenda of evangelism and apologetics as manifest in Christ. Therefore, the disciple is an apology, like Jesus, to the world.

¹⁵ See Mathew 4:14-17; Luke 2:30-32.

¹⁶ See John 1:12; 10:10; Luke 19:10.

¹⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

Jesus aware of this? Yes.¹⁹ Was Jesus successful? His apology was successful to those who received God's argument.²⁰

This project will focus on Luke-Acts as its basis to contend for Jesus as the model for Lived Narrative Apologetics. As such, in the third chapter, it will be argued that Jesus was fully aware that He was living the narrative of God as it unfolded to the world around Him, with the fulfillment of prophecy being an essential proof of such awareness.²¹ In addition to prophecy, Jesus explains the progression of God's narrative leading to the final act of God to have the Kingdom come: "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then, the good news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is urgently invited to enter it."²² It is this invitation into the story, narrative, and prophetic reality of God that Jesus models, and Luke-Acts historically recounts with other followers (i.e., the Apostle Paul).

Robert H. Stein, in his commentary, *Luke*, describes the thematic portrait of Jesus living in the narrative of God from the notion of "the kingdom of God" and, especially, the awareness of Jesus to that reality. Stein and Marshall offer a brief glimpse of the aim of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

The importance of this theme is evident both by its frequency of occurrence (some forty times in Luke and thirty-two specifically as the "kingdom of God") and its centrality in the gospel. It occurs in the birth narratives (1:33) and is the main theme of Jesus' (4:43) and the disciples' preaching (9:2). The kingdom is the inheritance of the righteous (6:20), the most important petition of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (11:20), and the future

¹⁹ See Luke 4:14-21; Acts 20:24.

²⁰ See Jn. 1:12.

²¹ Some of the clearest examples are Luke 3:4-6 (Isa 40:3-5); Luke 4:17-21 (Isa 61:1-2; 58:6); Luke 7:22-23 (Isa 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:18; 26:19; 61:1); Luke 7:27 (Mal 3:1); Luke 20:17 (Ps 118:22; Isa 28:16); Luke 22:37 (Isa 53:12); Acts 2:16-21 (Joel 2:28-32); Acts 2:25-28, 31 (Ps 16:8-11); Acts 2:34-35 (Ps 110:1); Acts 3:22-23 (Deut 18:15-19); Acts 3:25 (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4); Acts 4:25-26 (Ps 2:1-2); Acts 13:33 (Ps 2:7); Acts 13:34 (Isa 55:3); Acts 13:35 (Ps 16:10); Acts 15:16-17 (Jer 12:15; Amos 9:11-12); Acts 28:26-27 (Isa 6:9-10).

²² *Christian Standard Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), Lk 16:16.

hope of the believer (13:28–29). In Acts this theme also plays an important role. At times salvation is portrayed as entering the kingdom. According to Luke the kingdom of God has come, i.e., it has been “realized” in history with Jesus’ coming.²³

Having offered a brief overview of Lived Narrative Apologetics’ intentions and some of its prominent concepts, attention will now be given to the works that have influenced this project’s formation. What follows is an engagement with several works that have offered additional strength to the conceptualization of this project from a theological and practical application standpoint, which further establish the ideal of disciples being aware that they are within the story of God, a living story, and that *narrative* existence can challenge and confront others and, ultimately, re-story those outside of the Christian narrative.

SCRIPTURE AND THE AUTHORITY OF GOD: How to Read the Bible Today,

by N.T. Wright²⁴

In *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, N.T. Wright aims to develop a succinct text to explain how the Bible remains authoritative, primarily narrative.²⁵ His work to accomplish this task is developed in ten chapters and builds on the earlier work.²⁶ In

²³ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 46.

See the following in support to this point. On preaching: see: Luke 9:60; Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31. The theme in Acts see: Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31. Salvation portrayed as entering the kingdom see: Luke 18:24–25 with 18:19–20; 13:28–29 with 13:23; Acts 28:23, 31 with 28:28.

²⁴ N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (United States: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, XI.

²⁶ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Fortress Press, 1992).

this earlier work, Wright developed his argument: “seeing the biblical story as a five-act play, with ourselves called to improvise the concluding act, in chapter 5 of *The New Testament and the People of God*.”²⁷ Here, he aims to reinforce his earlier work and argue that followers of Jesus Christ regarded the ancient Israelite scriptures as having reached a climactic fulfillment in Jesus himself, generating the “new covenant.” The prologue sets the scene, putting the discussion about the Bible into its context within church history and contemporary culture.²⁸

This text has several important chapters to the premises of the Lived Narrative Apologetic’s aim. In chapter one, “By Whose Authority,” Wright argues that the authority of Scripture connects to a greater divine authority, woven into the story/narrative of God, and is a work to reclaim, renew, and restore the world from the fall. The purpose of the narrative is correlated to the power of the narrative to change one’s thinking and behavior.²⁹

Wright explains that certain phrases regularly act as “portable stories”—that is, ways of packing up longer narratives about God, Jesus, the church, and the world, folding them into convenient suitcases, and carrying them about with us.³⁰ The portable stories, such as Scripture, narrative, or story, point beyond themselves and work as shorthand to connote an authority beyond itself.³¹ In this way, Wright establishes the significance of the authority of Scripture, story, and narrative and, taken further, the disciple’s actualizing of that narrative to be authoritative.

²⁷ Ibid., XI.

²⁸ Ibid., XIII.

²⁹ Ibid., XXII-XXIII.

³⁰ Ibid., XXII.

³¹ Ibid., XXII-XXIII.

The authority of story is that it can wield power to change how people think and behave—in other words, a lived story can affect another’s belief.³² Wright says,

A story told with pathos, humor, or drama opens the imagination and invites readers and hearers to imagine themselves in similar situation, offering new insights about God and human beings which enable them then to order their own lives more wisely... This strongly suggests that for the Bible to have the effect it seems to be designed to have it will be necessary for the church to hear it as it is, not to chop it up in an effort to make it into something else.³³

Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Wright and adds that this truth is even more true when one lives the narrative. The reader encounters that narrative and story through a disciple’s encounter with them. Also, Lived Narrative Apologetics maintains that it is necessary to be aware of and realize oneself in the story of God, which can re-story another, bringing clarity and conviction about the salvation of God through Jesus.³⁴ When the narrative of Scripture is actualized, God’s “renewal project” takes on flesh.³⁵

In chapter two, “Israel and God’s Kingdom-People,” Wright explains the notion of Scripture as a platform by which God’s renewal project is made known.³⁶ The use of Scripture is to be a reminder over and over again of the work of God.³⁷ It is to discover God’s aim in salvation and demonstrate the proper way to be human in the presence of God with all emotions,

³² Ibid., XXIV-XXV.

³³ Ibid., XXV.

³⁴ Ibid., XXVII.

³⁵ This concept will be greater developed in chapter two of this project where the greater narrative and the five acts of Wright are explained in connection to Lived Narrative Apologetics.

³⁶ Ibid., XXXI-XXXIX.

³⁷ Ibid., XXXV.

needs, worship, and relational aspects therein accounted.³⁸ Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Wright and would seek more extensive application, vying that when the story is lived out by disciples, as a continued act of Jesus (Jesus, alive in His church, which is the Lived Narrative Apologetic), then the prophetic word “breaks into” the world again and again in human form, sharing the message of what God is doing to remake, renew, and restore the world.³⁹ In essence, Wright holds that everything needed for the human condition exists through the platform of Scripture. When the narrative takes on flesh, it is perceptibly efficacious, as in the example of Jesus, who illustrates God’s argument for the best life that one could have: the saved existence.⁴⁰ Wright contends that Jesus believed that He “had been sent to bring about the reformation,” including fulfilling God’s story to offer creation abundant life.⁴¹

Chapter eight, “How to Get Back on Track,” of Wright's work is most significant to the thesis of this project.⁴² In this chapter, Wright explains his “multilayer” view of Scripture that examines his proposal about a five-act hermeneutic: “The Bible itself offers a model for its own reading, which involves knowing where we are within the overall drama and what is appropriate within each act. These Acts are Creation, The Fall, Israel, Jesus, and The Church; they constitute the different stages in the divine drama which Scripture itself offers.”⁴³

³⁸ Ibid., XXXVIII.

³⁹ Ibid., XXXV.

⁴⁰ See Luke 19:10; Luke 15.

⁴¹ N. T. Wright, “Stories of The Kingdom (3): Judgment and Vindication,” In *Jesus and The Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2*, 320-368 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996).

⁴² N. T. Wright, “How to Get Back on Track,” In *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (United States: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), 115-142.

⁴³ Ibid., 122.

Chapter two of this project will explore how The Greater Narrative of Lived Narrative Apologetics exists in the dramatic acts of Scripture described by Wright. Also, work will be done to connect how, when the disciple understands The Greater Narrative, then the notion of *Act 5*, The Church, takes on a more significant place in “where you are” in the narrative and the mission God has for those who are invited into the story.

In this continuation of the renewal project of God, the disciple exists within the movement of a prophetic word, where the prophetic word (God’s story) is not only declared, but more directly realized. The moment disciples actualize being witnesses with Christ, the apostles, and the hosts of disciples in the historical narrative of Acts, their lives become prophetic expressions: lives with power, changing capacity, and the ability to enable the believer and disciple to captivate a watching world by the power of God, as the word is manifest, made flesh before the watching world.

By prophetic word, we mean that God is dynamically and powerfully doing in one’s life what the forthtelling of His Word does in another’s heart and mind. It was earlier noted by Wright that story/narrative can change belief. The biblical text argues the same for God’s word, Scripture, and its ability to shape intention and hearts and minds (see Heb. 4:12). Lived Narrative Apologetics maintains that the narrative lived creates the plausibility structure needed for another to believe the relevance of the word lived, its salvation, and its superiority as a story to live. Such plausibility occurs when the disciple is aware that they are stepping into the very story of God,

To this point, Lived Narrative Apologetics would contend that Wright does not go far enough in his 5th Act argument. He stops with the notion that disciples (and therefore the story of God) are in the 5th Act. However, it must be additionally argued that disciples have been invited into the ongoing manifestation of Scripture, the ongoing incarnation of Scripture.

with their story, and it is a tool for God to challenge, shatter, and change another's story through life (conversation, vocation, and demonstration of the narrative of God).

To the degree that Jesus' life was captivating, the disciples then became the new creation that grabbed what was lost in the garden (Genesis 3-The Fall of Mankind) and regained authority, image-bearing capacity, and prophetic power over the creative world to be realized in the created world as expressions of "continuations" (Mini-Christ, i.e., C.S. Lewis) of Jesus. The disciples' lives are re-storied and become narratives for the world to watch, read, and from which, be captivated. Just as Jesus was the Word made flesh, disciples are also epistles for the world to be read: living letters that shape others into disciples who are fully aware that they are living testimonies.⁴⁴ Jesus' followers are also living prophetic word; disciples are living as the body of Christ, and Christians are living as the ongoing glory of God, which can captivate and rescript the world as the narrative of God takes complete form in their existence.

TELLING A BETTER STORY: How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age,

by Joshua D. Chatraw⁴⁵

In *Telling A Better Story: How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age*, Joshua D. Chatraw expounds on the frustration of gospel conversations within the existing culture, not knowing where to begin, how to broker terms, and even ensuring understanding. Chatraw illustrates the

⁴⁴ See 2 Cor. 3:3.

⁴⁵ Joshua D. Chatraw, *Telling A Better Story: How to Talk About God in a Skeptical Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020).

frustration of cultural conversations by telling a story of a concussed moment where he was “reaching for understanding” without ever seeming to meet the answer to the question, “what time is it?”⁴⁶ Using this moment metaphorically, he maintains that this is the same issue Christianity finds itself in.⁴⁷ Christians are frustratingly unable to have Christian conversations with a skeptical world because they have not been able to answer the question, “what time is it?” Chatraw argues that the church does not know what time it is in association with the culture we are engaging.⁴⁸ He writes, “A shift has occurred in Western culture. Not only is God absent from the fabric of our most important institutions and cultural centers, but an array of competing views about life's most important questions are available to the public. Religious belief is simply one option among many—and an increasing number see it as strange.”⁴⁹ He reasons that the lack of stability between Christians and secularized seekers leaves Christians ill-suited for conversations with their non-Christian friends.⁵⁰ He further writes, “We may use similar vocabulary, but buried beneath our disagreements are different assumptions about life and its meaning and purpose, reason, and morality. People have so many misunderstandings, critiques, and fears about Christianity it's hard to even know where to begin.”⁵¹

Chatraw’s book offers insight into how to talk to skeptics and how to talk about God in a skeptical age without getting frustrated with the culture.⁵² He explains that one of the reasons

⁴⁶ Ibid., 24-27.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 9-11.

⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

⁵² Ibid., 7.

these conversations could potentially be frustrating is because we are attempting to have Christian conversations in a post-Christian world.

This book is about engaging the deepest aspirations of our secular friends and asking them to consider how the story of the gospel, as strange as may seem to them at first, just may lead them to what their heart has been looking for all along. This, of course, will mean asking them to do some thinking (and us doing some thinking and rethinking of our own), as well as challenging them to be as critical with their unbelief as they are with the possibility of belief. This also will mean coming alongside others, not with a posture of opposition, but rather with a posture of invitation: “Come, taste and see.”⁵³

Chatraw’s question, “what time is it?” is offered to broach the answer for engaging others in a post-Christian context. In this answer, he hopes to clarify for Christians what it means to navigate a secular world. He maintains that there is a need to translate that secular culture to Christians so that they can engage more robustly, meaningfully, and significantly. His work aims to build up the church to help them talk to others about their faith and engage the skeptical age where they are. Chatraw writes, “The central aim of this book is not to help you tell stories in general but rather to help you be a better communicator of God’s story in a world that no longer takes our plotline too seriously.”⁵⁴

The book has three sections. The first section is a better story about practicing apologetics in what Chatraw contends is a post-Christian world.⁵⁵ Therefore, one cannot assume that “giving the gospel” is effective in a gospel-illiterate context. Additionally, he argues that some practices of Christian apologetics do not transfer to everyday conversations or in discussions about belief. He is offering a way to think about apologetics to engage people over

⁵³ Ibid., 7-8.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 5-74.

the gospel, a way to think about conversations, gleaning from the best practices of apologetic tradition.

In part two, he unpacks the question, “how does it work?”⁵⁶ Given the cultural issues of our day, how does the Christian gospel speak to that? How can we speak to the cultural divide? In this section, Chatraw explores the common ground of humans that offers a foundation for conversational commonalities, such as morality, beauty, and human rights. These sorts of things, he contends, are common and basic, even universal truths that we can then use to answer the question: how can we have a conversation that gets to the gospel from these common denominators?

Part three of the text aims to remove the blocks to the Christian story, making it difficult for conversations to foster belief.⁵⁷ Here, note that if one can have a gospel discussion based on common denominators that everyone has (moral compass, the significance of beauty, human rights, and the like), one can still offer a block to receiving the gospel, which is what this section addresses. These blocks are present in retorts such as, “I cannot believe in the Christian story because it is not good. It includes suffering and struggle, which are still in the world.” Alternatively, “I cannot believe the Christian story because it cannot be true because it does not bear out in history. For example, people do not continuously rise from the dead. So why am I to believe such a thing?”

To these objections or blocks, Chatraw offers how to overcome those struggles and engage people even when they espouse skepticism about the Christian story. He writes that we are engaging over the contention and offering the people we are dealing with reasons they can

⁵⁶ Ibid., 75-170.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 171-220.

believe. Chatraw's text is unique in that he is not creating an apologetic rules guide as much as offering a way to enter a gospel conversation. His text also seeks to approach people as rational and imaginative beings who love; therefore, the book hopes to holistically communicate the whole story to whole people. This book hopes to see evangelism and apologetics working in unison. Chatraw says, "As we think about how the gospel transforms us, it shows us how it is a better story through how we live. From this, when we are living in a holy manner, we can engage in those conversations with skeptics more robustly because we see how the better story of Christianity is affecting our lives."

Lived Narrative Apologetics shares many places of commonality with *Telling a Better Story*, resulting in core aspects of function, as will be developed later in this project. Note several areas of agreement between the two. First, Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees that Christianity espouses a superior story. Chatraw writes, "The story of Christ is the true story of the God who is behind all that is true, good, and beautiful—'inside out' is about helping others see that what they have always been longing for can only be found in him."⁵⁸ Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees and maintains that the story of Christianity is the greatest narrative and worldview that one could live by, offering the most coherent answers to life's biggest questions.

Second, Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees that Christian apologetics and evangelism should be concerted. Chatraw draws on how evangelism is often frustrating, as Christians are uncontextualized with those they desire to share the gospel with, leaving the discussion incoherent due to the stories each is living: "Considering context is essential because we are attempting to reach people born into a story at a particular time, in a particular place, into a

⁵⁸ Ibid., 74.

particular family—all which define much of who we are and how we think.”⁵⁹ The need is for the correct tension between apologetics and evangelism. Chatraw says, “Local churches should serve as a living and breathing apologetic—an embodiment of faith, hope, and love...apologetics is now becoming more focused on generating productive conversations that open doors for people to consider the gospel.”⁶⁰

Chatraw does not take this notion far enough, as will be discussed shortly. Evangelism and apologetics are two sides of the same coin. Good evangelism takes place with good apologetics. As Chatraw has contended, this post-Christian culture necessitates the interplay and reimagining of these practices interplay.

Third, Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Chatraw in the need to engage our culturally captive skeptics in a manner that transfers, reaches the imagination, and meets the commonalities that everyone has. Chatraw contends that this ultimately is an apology of love.

This book has attempted to model a way to engage by applying an "inside out" apologetics. This approach is dependent on gospelized imaginations, not primarily on technique. ... apologetics wisdom is gained as we plant our lives within the community of faith, following exemplars and by faith living the day in, day out story of the cross and resurrection. When our imaginations have been formed by the gospel story, we retain not only our strategy but something even more powerful for our witness—our very lives....The gospel should not only shape our apologetics, but as we step into the story—singing, reading, fasting, praying, and confessing the gospel—it will shape how we spontaneously imagine each moment of our lives. As this happens, we will not only speak the truth; we will embody the truth—for which there is no greater apologetic.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12-19.

⁶¹ Ibid., 224.

Lived Narrative Apologetics especially resonates with the notion that the gospel story forms lives. This formative quality is also a point to pivot to several contrasts to Chatraw's work, offering some distinction in what Lived Narrative Apologetics means.

There are several areas in which Lived Narrative Apologetics contrasts with Chatraw's work in *Telling A Better Story*. First is the fact that Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that disciples are not exclusively or solely interested in conversing with the seeker, which offers an on-ramp for getting to the gospel story. Lived Narrative Apologetics emphasizes that the disciple is a part of that story. We would argue that within the greater story of God, part of the agenda of this story was to get to Christianity, in which every Christian and disciple is invited into the story, so their lives and stories will be changed to not only communicate the story of Jesus, but their story as well. That story is told and lived; however, to distinguish between a life "formed by the gospel" versus what is argued here, Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that disciples are aware they are actualizing the story of God through the life they live. Therefore, in Lived Narrative Apologetics, disciples recognize they are called, living in a way that itself is a story, as well as preaching, teaching, and having conversations about the gospel.

Second, Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that it is an apologetic methodology practiced by Jesus and perpetuated by the apostles. In this apologetic, Jesus functioned within the greater story of Scripture, fully aware of His place in time and the reality that His efforts were prophetic encounters to be perpetuated by the church, allowing that lived narrative to captivate the readers of His life and renarrative their lives with the ability to do the same for others. From that, one's testimony about the change that God's story has had on their life becomes a part of the gospel that God will use to inflict change in the life of a seeker.⁶² Paul's story is used in

⁶² See Paul's testimony in each of the Act's accounts of his conversion.

unison to explain the gospel and is considered Holy Spirit-inspired Scripture. When the disciple is in the story of God as one called into the narrative, their life is prophetically used by the Holy Spirit to propel others toward a greater story to live.

Where Chatraw is distinct in communicating methodologies that allow Christians to have more robust conversations, Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees and takes it a step further, contending that we are within and a part of that story; we are used to communicate God's story, which has re-storied our stories, in hopes to challenge and change the story of the listener, watcher, or reading world.⁶³

NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS: Sharing The Relevance, Joy, And Wonder of The Christian Faith,
by Alister E. McGrath⁶⁴

In *Narrative Apologetics*, Alister McGrath argues that narrative apologetics is a supplemental discipline. He holds that narrative apologetics is a means to offset or supplement one's apologetic methodology of choice.⁶⁵ McGrath says, "Narrative apologetics is best seen as

⁶³ Said another way, the notion of "inside out" is modified by Lived Narrative Apologetics to contend that like Jesus, disciples are called inside God's story and then live it out; God's story is at work inside the disciple (as they grow in awareness) and then it is lived out. Jesus stepped inside competing stories, which He captured with the greater redemptive story of God. This is the incarnation first realized by Jesus and is the aim of Jesus' followers. The Holy Spirit is at work to manifest letters of Christ to the world, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God on tablets that are hearts of flesh (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). The result of this new incarnational expression is a continuation of glory for God among men as the world reads God's wisdom lived before them.

⁶⁴ Alister E. McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics: Sharing The Relevance, Joy, And Wonder of The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2019).

⁶⁵ Alister McGrath, 2021. YouTube Channel. "An Introduction to Christian Apologetics," from Alister McGrath Christian Theology Introduction. Accessed November 22, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H3bckA1o8c>.

This is a set of fifteen 45-minute videos which provide a comprehensive introduction to Christian apologetics. Dr. McGrath gave these lectures for Regent College Vancouver in May 2021. This summation was

supplementing other approaches, reflecting the rich and deeply satisfying nature of the Christian gospel. It is one apologetic resource among others.”⁶⁶ McGrath believes in the weightiness and significance of storytelling and narrative’s capacity to enchant another person through the story.⁶⁷ Referencing C.S. Lewis’s work from *The Weight of Glory*, “Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us.”⁶⁸ To Lewis’s point, McGrath explains that the Christian story is the story that liberates.⁶⁹

McGrath’s use of story is undivided from the understanding that there is a greater narrative from which the Christian story finds itself.⁷⁰ Furthermore, that story makes sense of all other stories and illuminates the human being’s story, offering the best life possible. He simplifies his argument in *Narrative Apologetics* by simply saying that we can appreciate that

taken from the lecture entitled Apologetics 6: Narrative Apologetics: Rediscovering Stories. This is, in essence a lecture over the book.

⁶⁶ But, Lived Narrative Apologetics would add that narrative that is lived, takes a bolder step towards saying that apologetics can itself be reimagined. A disciple can reflect the satisfying nature of the Christian gospel through actualizing the gospel in one’s life. This is especially the case when the disciple recognizes they are called into the story and living that story out among those who witness it.

⁶⁷“This short book aims to introduce and commend narrative apologetics—that is to say, an approach to affirming, defending, and explaining the Christian faith by telling stories. It sets out to explore how these stories can open up important ways of communicating and commending the gospel, enabling it to be understood, connecting it with the realities of human experience, and challenging other stories that are told about the world and ourselves” (7). “Yet it is an approach that some will find particularly winsome and welcome, including those who find more clinically rational approaches to apologetics to lack imaginative depth and emotional intelligence” (7).

Lived Narrative Apologetics would offer that when the story of God is embodied, it takes on human emotion and intelligence in a way that allows a transcendent and superior way to deal with the human condition.

⁶⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory* (New York: NY, Harper One Publishers, 1949), 31.

⁶⁹ “...this book is an invitation to rediscover something that ought never to have been forgotten—the power of narratives to capture the imagination, and thus to render the mind receptive to the truths that they enfold and express” (7-8).

⁷⁰ The term “metanarrative” is widely used to refer to a grand story that encompasses, positions, and explains “little stories,” providing an imaginative or conceptual framework that weaves these into a coherent whole (10).

narratives are powerful.⁷¹ Theologically, we understand that narratives are used throughout Scripture. Practically, within the Judeo-Christian tradition, narratives are couched in the canon of Scripture with examples such as the Exodus story, the deliverance from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, and the gospel narrative itself. For McGrath, the story of Jesus serves as a culminating narrative, depicting the life of Jesus and His coming from heaven to deliver, vindicate, and bring freedom to all of humanity.

McGrath notes that the gospel shapes and affects every Christian's story and life. Although there is much agreement between Narrative Apologetics and McGrath's fundamental convictions on the power of story, there are also some significant contrasts to the aim of Lived Narrative Apologetics. Note several distinctions.

First, McGrath argues that Narrative Apologetics can challenge the imagination, to enchant the enchanted that have been held captive, and liberate the captivated. Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with this notion. However, where Narrative Apologetics stops, Lived Narrative Apologetics continues and argues that not only is narrative powerful (compelling), but Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that disciples are invited into the narrative of God.⁷² Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that God's narrative depicts that His people would become a part of the story He is now telling the world.⁷³ Therefore, the disciple ought to live from an awareness

⁷¹ Alister McGrath, 2021. YouTube Channel. "An Introduction to Christian Apologetics," from Alister McGrath Christian Theology Introduction. Accessed November 22, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H3bckA1o8c>.

⁷²Lived Narrative Apologetics hinges on a biblical argument that Christians, like Christ, are in the story as a part of God's story. See Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; 9:15; 22:6-21; 23:11; 26:12-23; 28:23-31; 2 Timothy 2:1-2. The historical narrative of Scripture depicts Jesus being aware of his life, and it actualizes the story of God. He invites his followers into the story, changing their stories for God's ongoing narrative. This awareness is understood as Acts records the life of Paul, who perpetuates the same realization.

⁷³ See Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

that they are re-storied by God's story, have been brought into God's story, and are actively living out God's story, which has the enchanting capacity to challenge, critique, and change any other story as it is lived, told, and tested.

It could be argued that each conversion story illustrates one being invited into the story of God as the story is told, and one then agrees to the story, changing their story.⁷⁴ From that point of conversion, disciples become adherents of the story and are narratives of God.⁷⁵ The Lived Narrative Apologetic states that the church, those called out locally and universally, represent Christ. This continued incarnational presence is the epicenter of "The Way" of Jesus manifesting to the watching world.⁷⁶ As living narratives, their lives challenge the rest of the world, not just with what they say, but also with how they live and the argument being made, as they are aware of what is being actualized through their existence.⁷⁷

McGrath's text agrees with N.T. Wright's *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*. In this book, Wright argues that the Bible communicates a meta-narrative with many narratives within that story, all of which are cohesive story from God.⁷⁸ Here, the

⁷⁴For example, consider the Jewish first fruit's radical shift to Christ's way. This point will be further developed in chapter three of the project. See Acts 2:36-47; 8:12-ff; 9:1-22; 16:14-40; 18:5-11; 19:18-20.

⁷⁵ See Acts 8:1-4.

⁷⁶This point will be further discussed in chapter three of this project. Every local church is a local Christ, and the whole church is the universal Christ. The real story is lived out in real lives in a real location and in real time. Therefore, The Lived Narrative Apologetic is contextual to the lived life in a certain time, through certain events, in a certain place. It is authenticity realized. The Lived Narrative Apologetic is not primarily a generalized concept—though in some ways it is—but is predominantly a specified one taking in a one-of-a-kind life lived in a one-of-a-kind space.

⁷⁷ See the definition of Lived Narrative Apologetics above.

⁷⁸From a theological standpoint, N.T Wright's *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* agree with God's greater narrative, culminating in a final act in which Christianity finds itself. Wright's work argues that the overarching story of Scripture unfolds through five acts. Lived Narrative Apologetics, from this framework, contends that God intended to see Christian living as an invitation into the final act of God. This will be developed further in the next chapter.

point of distinction is that Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that not only are the sub-stories a part of that narrative, but they are also dramatic presentations of the move of God to get humanity to His final act. In this final act,⁷⁹ Christianity now invites the world into God's ultimate agenda, which is to bring the Kingdom to the world, re-narrating the world with a greater narrative than the one they are living.

McGrath explains that secular culture's story has enchanted many, leaving people inept, ill-informed, malformed, and undersupplied to live an abundant life.⁸⁰ God's story offers the capacity and potential to be free.⁸¹ Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with this notion and would add that it is through the awareness of being called into God's story that empowers humanity to be the best version of themselves. God rescripts with a superior story and calls one's life to become a witness for another through the testimony of that change, thus appealing to the imagination of humanity. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that the imaginative, enchanting capacity to challenge, change, and ultimately move individuals into a better life is illustrated within Scripture and, therefore, ought to be the aim of disciples.⁸²

Second, Narrative Apologetics stops short of what it could offer by simply being a supplemental tool used for apologetics. McGrath clearly states his intentions with his work and its limitations, saying, "I set out to show that this approach is both intellectually defensible and practically useful. It is my hope that this work will help its readers assess narrative approaches to apologetics and craft their own distinct styles of approach, adapted to their own situations."

⁷⁹ See the N.T. Wright discussion.

⁸⁰ See John 10:10.

⁸¹ Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 31-33. See John 1:12; Romans 1:14-17; Ephesians 2:1-10.

⁸² See the earlier note on Biblical foundation of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

Lived Narrative Apologetics, in contrast, hopes not to offer a supplement, but rather a more robust and fully formed awareness of a disciple's life being an apologetic process. Like Chatraw,⁸³ McGrath is utilizing the story to court the imagination that has been held captive through secular narratives. Lived Narrative Apologetics takes these methodologies further, contending that one is living within the very story of God to fully furnish every aspect of the human condition/human life. When the narrative has been actualized, the disciple is aware that they are within, living, and telling the story. That life is an answer God uses to meet the questions of the human condition. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that life lived in God's narrative and for God's agenda becomes an apologetic methodology that contends for God holistically. The disciple is an argument for God through one's character, an argument for God in one's values, and an argument for God by one's awareness of God's story, offering the answers to life's most troubling questions.⁸⁴

Third, McGrath describes the case study section as an opportunity to see how narrative could be used. Nevertheless, at the end of each one, he contends that we are to taste and see how one has experienced or actualized an Egyptian bondage and liberation-like space in our life. How might we tell? He challenges the reader to answer how they were captive and how God freed or liberated them from bondage. The point, it seems, is that he looks at each of the narratives as an opportunity to say that the power of telling that story is compelling. However, then he points to the reader to say that we must step into that narrative, feel ourselves around it, and walk in what it would have been like to be captive by seeing our former story being re-storied by God's story.

⁸³ See earlier engagement with *Telling A Better Story*.

⁸⁴This point speaks to the importance of a biblical worldview, which will be further discussed later in the project.

Again, Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with McGrath's need to understand deliverance and celebrate God's ability to liberate. However, this is also another juncture where Lived Narrative Apologetics distinguishes. McGrath does not go far enough with his point. It should be argued that the gospel story has liberated us, and disciples have been invited into it. Disciples become a part of God's narrative as smaller narratives to share with others under the meta-narrative that God would redeem all humanity. The disciple has both the responsibility and challenge to function with an awareness that they are living in the plan of God: one of the stories under the major story of God that can be a gospel story to another person.⁸⁵

McGrath offers a remarkable point about the power of narrative but stops short of its potential. Lived Narrative Apologetics offers the distinction, as we see with Jesus, Who was aware that the greater narrative of God was about His coming. Jesus lived in and stepped into the story to actualize His part, inviting others into the story to continue what He began to do and teach. Jesus' life illustrates a gospel narrative that pairs evangelism and apologetics as two sides of the same agenda, contending for the best life a person can live with the narrative of God.

⁸⁵To this point, this project has individualized the presentation of Lived Narrative Apologetics, but should not be understood that this practice is outside of the community of believers that make up the church of Christ. The foundation of Christianity, as recorded in Acts, is a record of the church developed by the work of the Holy Spirit and, notably, the ongoing work of Jesus; hence, His claim that to persecute the church is to persecute Him. As this project develops the terms under consideration, work will be done in chapters three and four to illustrate the collective expression of discipleship in the church and the individual expression. Additionally, some points of harmony from the work of Kevin J. Vanhoozer agree with each disciple, making up an argument for God to develop a cumulative case for his superior claims for the best life that one could live.

“Sapiential Apologetics: The Dramatic Demonstration of Gospel Truth.” In *Exhibition Pictures at a Theological: Scenes of the Church’s Worship, Witness, and Wisdom*,

By, Kevin J. Vanhoozer⁸⁶

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, in “The Turn to Drama, A Proposal for Sapiential Apologetics,” argues that the seminal text for apologetics seems to be 1 Peter 3:15, in which Peter says that the disciple is to be always ready to give a defense.⁸⁷ Vanhoozer contends that although we tend to look for defense to be the most important term in that verse, it seems readiness is equally important: “What strikes me about this is the ‘always ready,’ for this refers to a dispositional quality in persons—readiness—that may be as important as the defense itself. Indeed, that will be my suggestion: that members of the church are not only living ‘letters of recommendation’ (2 Cor 3:1-2) but also living proofs.”⁸⁸ Vanhoozer argues that readiness is a state of one’s character that may be as important as the defense itself; it is proof of the superior wisdom of God to live life.

Vanhoozer’s work is the most in line with the aim of Lived Narrative Apologetics, primarily because he hopes to establish a new vision for Christian apologetics and the way Christian faith is defended. According to Vanhoozer, this is most effectively realized when the church takes up the theatrical framework to orient apologetics toward defending Christian truth as practical demonstrations of Christian wisdom, which shapes community life and makes the

⁸⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Sapiential Apologetics: The Dramatic Demonstration of Gospel Truth.” In, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition: Scenes of The Church’s Worship, Witness, and Wisdom* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 217-250.

⁸⁷ See 1 Pt. 3:15.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

church an embodied rational argument for God:⁸⁹ “The church is the body of Christ, the embodied reason and wisdom of God.”⁹⁰ Note, again, the premises of Lived Narrative Apologetics.⁹¹

Sapiential Apologetics aligns closely with Lived Narrative Apologetics. It has helped shape much of its formation and distinct arguments for being the first model of apologetics, as demonstrated by Jesus. Vanhoozer’s work is precedent-setting in this project’s aim. It will be elaborated on in the third chapter more intently as the church and Jesus are placed in tension to describe “The Way,” its first designation in Acts 9:2. From this discussion, more clarity will be offered to distinguish Vanhoozer’s premise of practical display of wisdom contrasted with Lived Narrative Apologetics.

Vanhoozer’s model of Sapiential Apologetics affords the disciple a paradigm to see the intercourse of theology, evangelism, and apologetics. Concerning Sapiential Apologetics, Vanhoozer writes, “Every Christian represents a crucial premise, and taken together, these premises compromise the socially embodied argument, which is the body of Christ.”⁹²

⁸⁹ Ibid., 219.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 219.

⁹¹ See the definition given under “Defining Lived Narrative Apologetics.”

⁹² Kevin J. Vanhoozer. 2006. “Theology and Apologetics.” In *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, edited by Jack Campbell and Gavin J. McGrath (Downers Grove, IL, 2006), 42.

Seeing the significance of Sapiential Apologetics helps shape one’s means of understanding the application power of Lived Narrative Apologetics and its practical implementation. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that it is a first model that grounds all apologetic models. It contends that Jesus is an archetype who fills the seedbed of all other practical insights on apologetics. Therefore, His *doing* and *teaching*, realized in Lived Narrative Apologetics, is foundational for all relevant models of apologetics and Christian apologetics. This argument will be further developed in the final part of this project.

In his description of Sapiential Apologetics, Vanhoozer apprehends the need for a practical apologetic.⁹³ Vanhoozer calls this apologetic aim a practical display of wisdom, “phronesis” (practical relationality).⁹⁴ According to Vanhoozer, phronesis is a type of intentional living by disciples that embodies our implicit understanding of why we are here and what we are to do.⁹⁵

Note the following summary of Sapiential Apologetics.

1. Sapiential Apologetics explains the gospel in “divine doing.” This gospel is a dramatic effort of heaven, and the disciple continues the power of that message by revealing the heart and mind of God in their every activity, “His being is a being – in – missionary – activity.”⁹⁶
2. Sapiential Apologetics explicates the goodness and beauty of Christianity transmitted through one’s life, worship, and action.⁹⁷ It is argued that the best defense of Christ and the legitimacy of the gospel is in the disciple’s demonstration in everyday speech and action.⁹⁸
3. Sapiential Apologetics maintains the harmonious purpose of fully functional discipleship and eliminates the bifurcation that tends to present itself in theology and apologetics.⁹⁹

⁹³ Vanhoozer, *Pictures at Theological Exhibition*, 222-245.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 228-229.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 233-234.

“Theology and apologetics are not separate specializations, but two moments or stages in the life-long witness of the Christian disciple.”¹⁰⁰

4. Sapiential Apologetics is foundational in connecting as Christ would connect to communicate the faith and its subsidiary components.¹⁰¹ From a robust embracement of being an ambassador of truth in holistic living, disciples are always aware of the truth of their God, their origin, their purpose, the human problem, eschatology, and soteriology. Hence, their worldview.¹⁰²
5. Sapiential Apologetics is the platform in which the evidence and everyday living are found to be worth enduring through life's encounters.¹⁰³ The disciple is called from the world to a walk with Christ, including suffering.¹⁰⁴ Faith is demonstrated to the world as each disciple endures life, giving an exposition of truth that can be trusted.¹⁰⁵ “There is a real sense in which we, like the apostle Paul, are to die daily as we exhibit our faith (1 Cor. 15:31) since everyday situations give us plenty of opportunities to offer compelling demonstrations of the truth that ‘in Christ.’”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 234.

Lived Narrative Apologetics has earlier argued that apologetics and evangelism (here Vanhoozer discusses theology) are two sides of the same coin. This is equally relevant as all three of these disciplines ought to be innate features for the disciple who practices them while being aware of the implication of story (this awareness is ever-growing). Therefore, she is ever making known the teaching of God, clarifying the debris of false constructs, and inviting one into the story and its promise of abundant living. In other words, she is always a practitioner of theology, apologetics, and evangelism.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 234-238.

¹⁰² Ibid., 234-238.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 239-245.

¹⁰⁴ See 2 Tim. 2:10-12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 243.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 243.

These five points offer summation to the notion that the dramatic apologetic is a “divine doing,” in which disciples express the wisdom of the Christian Scriptures by living a biblically informed life. Vanhoozer is correct: an apologetic who meets man with the wisdom of God allows man to see the ongoing demonstration of Jesus incarnate through disciples who perpetuate that lived wisdom or, as argued here, the lived narrative.¹⁰⁷ This informed life insists on the voice and narrative of God to direct life as a means of life.¹⁰⁸ Considering the import of Sapiential Apologetics, as summarized above, this review will now turn to offer where Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Vanhoozer’s findings and would argue that Sapiential Apologetics stops short. Note several distinctions between both projects.

First, what Vanhoozer calls readiness,¹⁰⁹ Lived Narrative Apologetics calls awareness. Awareness means that one is cognizant that God calls them into an ongoing assignment that includes expressing God’s superior model for life.¹¹⁰ By calling, it is meant that one is actualizing their following of Jesus to join him in God’s renewal project (the narrative itself) to see the kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. We do not mean that one is called for an assignment or to accomplish an assignment; rather, one is called within into a narrative. Here, the intention is to

¹⁰⁷ This project will later contend that Christ in the church empowers the disciples to offer the world demonstrations of his continued impact in an incarnational manner. As fully functional disciples, the church contends for a “holy life” and that one’s “whole life” is committed to someone and something more significant than oneself. As ambassadors, people of the church actualize the mandate to represent God and partner in the reconciliation mandate, while modeling Jesus to the world. As selfless followers, disciples embrace the notion that dying to live, is like Christ. As worshipers, the value of the church’s veneration of God is given relevance by the followers’ life being complete sacrifices to God, reasonable expressions.

See Romans 12:1-2; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13; Eph. 3:10; Jn. 1:14; 2Cor. 5:16-21; Rom. 8:36; Gal 12:20; 5:24; 6:14.

¹⁰⁸ See Mt. 4:4; Psalm 42; Psalm 119; Job 23:12.

¹⁰⁹ In reference to 1 Peter 3:15, “Be ready.”

¹¹⁰ See John 1:12; 10:10; Luke 16:16; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:1-15; 2 Timothy 2:2.

see the connection between Wright’s work and Act 5, which is the ongoing invitation of the disciples into the renewal project of God. Wright writes, “It is an essential part of authentic Christian discipleship to see the New Testament as the foundation for the ongoing (and still open-ended) fifth act and to recognize that it cannot be supplanted or supplemented.”¹¹¹ This invitation into the story takes our story to use as God’s tool to re-story another, appealing to the imagination and plausibility for belief and, therefore, change. Hence, one’s life is executing the agenda of God, narratively expressing God’s story to the world, not just in manner and conversation, but in *full awareness of each moment being divine and the result of prophetic fulfillment, “today” is this story made known.*¹¹² One is called into the story of God to eternize the impact of incarnational living for the world, which looks on to read and watch the story being lived, taught, and demonstrated before them.¹¹³ Vanhoozer contends that the practical demonstration of the wisdom of God is the most effective proof for the disciple. Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with the importance of that demonstration. However, it holds that the proof is more plausible when the disciple is not just living as wisdom on display but *within wisdom as the product and seed*, having the potential to produce more of the same wisdom, “mini-Christ.”

Second, Vanhoozer argues that it is dramatic when the Word of God, the wisdom of God, is lived out before the world. When His wisdom is lived, the dramatic turn becomes apologetic in that it contends for the wisdom of God in opposition to secular narratives or the wisdom of the world.¹¹⁴ To do so, Vanhoozer uses the metaphor of actors on a stage to depict the dramatic

¹¹¹ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, 126.

¹¹² See Luke 4:16-21; Luke 24:36-49; Acts 1:4-8; 9:1-16.

¹¹³ You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 3:2.

¹¹⁴ Vanhoozer has in mind the secular captivity of Christians and non-Christians.

presentation of the wisdom of God before the world. This demonstration of wisdom occurs when disciples stand as actors on the stage of life, learning the script that comes from God and then acting that script out before the watching world, who then sees this demonstration of God's word lived out before them, demonstrating its relevance and ability to offer insight to life. Thus, this dramatic turn is the platform the watching world learns of the superior wisdom of God compared to their current paradigm for life.

Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Vanhoozer but believes that his turn to drama is missing a vital part for the actors. Lived Narrative Apologetics would add that disciples are not merely "actors" but that they actualize.¹¹⁵ Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that the church ought to be fully *aware* that it not only should learn the script but also appreciate that the wisdom for living is superior to all the wisdom offered by the world. However, it is a living script read by a watching world. Each disciple is the Word on display. Each disciple is a story. *The church, then, comprises persons that the Holy Spirit has actively assembled as stones and statements to build the structure of God's argument to a world held captive by a lesser narrative.* Disciples are within the very story of the Word of God and powerfully affect the recipients of that word, like the living word (see Hebrews 4:12). Furthermore, the church ought to see that she (the church) is the point of the story, continuation of the story, ongoing expression, and living narrative of God for the world. Consequently, change and conversion comes from being called into the story with The Creator as renewed, given mission, and made a fresh living story for the world. Such radical

¹¹⁵ By merely it is not intended to trivialize but to distinguish between the divergence of the two projects being discussed. The metaphor used by Vanhoozer does not allow for the analogy of an actor learning scripture and playing a part to suggest actualizing that they are the script. That is what is intended here. Not that the church is Scripture, but that they are the point of and part of the story.

demonstrations embody the wisdom of God in an unequaled, transcultural, ethnically robust, and contextually relevant manner for every individual.

Furthermore, this project will argue that God uses one's story to join the renewal project of God. God, as seen in the life of Paul, will use one's story as a part of the Holy Spirit's work to renovate another's story. For example, when making his defense, the apostle Paul tells his story within the message and part of the message.¹¹⁶ *The Holy Spirit uses the telling of his story, as the telling of God's story, to re-story another's story.* The narrative of Paul becomes God's narrative, as Paul is called into God's narrative. Jesus tells Paul, "You are called into my story, and you will be useful to me for my story, to tell your story." Paul, then, was fully aware that he was called out of a season into the story of God. He is indicating that every disciple 'called in' is 'called out' of one narrative into another: God's narrative. One is not just being equipped, but also authorized, by the realization that one is in God's story.

Therefore, disciples are not solely acting out a script. Instead, they are fully displaying God's story to the world. Again, this awareness is the contrast offered by Lived Narrative Apologetics, and it contends, additionally, that the more a disciple is aware and actualizes the story they live, the more they realize the imaginative capacity of God to challenge and evangelistically connect to a post-Christian context apologetically. This aim is an ancient one, allowing the greatest model for apologetics, Jesus, to be memorialized in the life of every Jesus follower as they step into the scheme of redemption and live on purpose as Jesus. Perhaps this is what Vanhoozer intended as he alludes to C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, who writes,

"Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life, we also shall be sons of God. We shall love

¹¹⁶ See Acts 22:1-21; 24:10-21; 26:1-23.

the Father as He does, and the Holy Ghost will arise in us. He came to this world and became a man to spread to other men the kind of life He has — by what I call ‘good infection.’ Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.”¹¹⁷

It may be necessary to summarize what has been concluded from the works under consideration. What follows is a brief statement on what these works have contributed to Lived Narrative Apologetics, points of harmony, and points of dissonance that make for the distinction and contribution of this project to apologetics, as well as a conclusion to this chapter.

SUMMATION OF THE TEXTS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Telling A Better Story has contributed to the Lived Narrative Apologetics aim in that it clarifies the need for an embodied apologetic that goes further than character and commonality.¹¹⁸ This contribution is especially the case as Chatraw masterfully establishes the problem that Lived Narrative Apologetics intends to address by explaining a post-Christian audience.¹¹⁹ Such a context insists that apologetics and evangelism can transfer their message to a listening ear or watching audience. Additionally, *Telling A Better Story* offers a framework for the place of character and relationships in explaining The Gospel and the court of understanding for apologetics. This book has attempted to model a way to engage by applying an “inside out”

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 177.

¹¹⁸ Chatraw, *Telling A Better Story*, 24-27.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

apologetics.¹²⁰ Chatraw rightly explores the need to remove the blocks to the Christian story, which makes it difficult for conversations to foster belief.¹²¹

McGrath's *Narrative Apologetics* has contributed to the aim of this project as it articulates the compelling and persuasive power of story/narrative. Additionally, this text supports the central point for God's meta-narrative that anchors the reality from the story of God from which all other stories find their grounding. Narratives are powerful.¹²² McGrath notes that every Christian's story is shaped by the gospel and its effect on one's life.

“This short book aims to introduce and commend narrative apologetics—that is to say, an approach to affirming, defending, and explaining the Christian faith by telling stories. It sets out to explore how these stories can open up important ways of communicating and commending the gospel, enabling it to be understood, connecting it with the realities of human experience, and challenging other stories that are told about the world and ourselves.”¹²³

Narrative Apologetics articulates the imaginative potential of a story and its means of persuasion in any story. The narrative/story allows the facilitator to construct plausibility in the dimension of humanity that is otherwise unreachable.

The significance of “Sapiential Apologetics: The Dramatic Demonstration of Gospel Truth”¹²⁴ contributes to this project's understanding of the application power of a Lived Narrative in Apologetics and its practical implementation. Vanhoozer's model use of phronesis explicates

¹²⁰ Ibid., 224.

¹²¹ Ibid., 171-220.

¹²² Alister McGrath, 2021. YouTube Channel. “An Introduction to Christian Apologetics,” from Alister McGrath Christian Theology Introduction. Accessed November 22, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H3bckA1o8c>.

¹²³ McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 7.

¹²⁴ This was footnoted earlier.

an embodied understanding of the church, which points to an understanding of who she is and why she exists for the world.¹²⁵ The disciple is called from the world to a walk with Christ, including suffering.¹²⁶ Faith is demonstrated to the world as each disciple endures life, giving an exposition of truth that can be embraced as true.¹²⁷ Again, Vanhoozer's model of Sapiential Apologetics affords the disciple a paradigm to see the intercourse of theology, evangelism, and apologetics.

N. T. Wright's *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* has contributed to this project by establishing the notion of Scripture being the platform from which God's renewal project is made known.¹²⁸ Wright also explains the multilayer view of Scripture, which facilitates the discussion of where the disciple finds themselves in the narrative of God today, thus understanding what time it is.¹²⁹ In "Eschatological Discipleship," Trevin Wax offers insight into the worldview value of Wright's text, which is another dimension of this work to the project under consideration.¹³⁰

For Wright, asking the question, "What time is it?" clarifies the shape of worldview thinking and keeps one from losing the important "this-world" dimension of discipleship. This question situates people not only in the world—a place in space ("where are we?")—but also in cultural moment—a place in time ("When are we?"). Just as humans cannot conceive of themselves apart from geography and physicality, they cannot conceive of themselves as timeless beings.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Vanhoozer, *Pictures at Theological Exhibition*, 222-245.

¹²⁶ See 2 Tim. 2:10-12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹²⁸ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 31-39.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³⁰ This will be further developed in chapter two.

¹³¹ Trevin K. Wax, "Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understanding Their Historical and Cultural Context" (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018), 20-21.

Wax helps to articulate the real moment-in-time value of the church, seeing herself as living the narrative in this world, in this time, in this space, globally, and in every culture. Act 5 is not just read; it is realized now.¹³²

Several areas of dissonance will now be given notice in difference to these works. First, Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that *Telling A Better Story* does not go far enough with its methodology. The inside-out model of apologetics lacks an essential aspect of awareness that would maintain that one is a prophetic extension of God, living in the story of God that clarifies and persuades others, ultimately, for their salvation.

Second, this project holds that *Narrative Apologetics* does not complete its potential as an apologetic method. It is understood that McGrath maintains that *Narrative Apologetics* is a supplement. Conversely, Lived Narrative Apologetics sees narrative as the apologetic platform God will use to enchant the enchanted. As Lewis says, “Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us... that is narrative.”¹³³ Said another way, the narrative that is lived (with full awareness) has the capacity to capture the imagination and offer a superior life. Narrative is essential for an apologetic method to contest and create plausibility structures to consider a superior narrative.

Third, Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that the first model grounds all apologetic models. It contends that Jesus is an archetype who funds the seedbed of all other practical

¹³² To this point, Lived Narrative Apologetics would contend that Wright does not go far enough in his 5th Act argument. He stops with the notion that disciples (and therefore the story of God) are in the 5th Act. However, it must be additionally argued that disciples have been invited into the ongoing manifestation of Scripture, the ongoing incarnation of Scripture.

¹³³ Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 31.

insights on apologetics. Therefore, His *doing* and *teaching*, realized in Lived Narrative Apologetics, is foundational for all practical models of apologetics and Christian apologetics. This argument will be further developed in the final part of this project. Sapiential Apologetics is foundational in connecting as Christ would connect to communicate the faith and its subsidiary components.¹³⁴

Fourth, the process of actualizing the narrative, as argued by Lived Narrative Apologetics, is established by the combination of Kevin J. Vanhoozer's "Sapiential Apologetics: The Dramatic Demonstration of Gospel Truth" and N. T. Wright's *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*. "Sapiential Apologetics" practical wisdom or *phronesis* establishes the cumulative effect of wisdom lived out. Vanhoozer's metaphor of the script and the actors on the stage also allows for the clear connection of a robust discipleship portrait. Vanhoozer's work adds the discipleship pivot that gives more girth to Chatraw's point on character and bridges N.T. Wright's work.

From this marriage, Lived Narrative Apologetics gains the means of articulating each aspect of its designation. Note each clause in distinction.

Lived proposes more than a practice or model, but a life that is divinely purposed. The disciple's life is like the life of Christ in that they are walking in the same awareness; it is the very life of Christ "reliving" in the church and the individual Christian. The disciple is aware that they are called into a new life, and, in all aspects of that existence, he is living in a way that points beyond himself. Life is not exclusively following a written page (though necessary); it understands that the disciple is the page, and God uses all aspects of His life to tell the story to another as the disciple actualizes the story.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 234-238.

Narrative proposes that this life is within the revealed will of God, both as the story of humanity from the beginning of time and the explanation of what one is here to do right now. The narrative is how all chosen worldview structures are recognized as good or bad, effective, or ineffective for doing life. The narrative establishes a process of plausibility. Narrative, especially when understood as Scripture, is the wisdom and will of God being realized as the disciple lives within that story practically and prophetically (as the dynamic power of a living word).

Apologetics indicates clearing the debris of confusion, countering the misinformation, and offering a case for hope. In this trio, apologetics comprises theology, the proofs of God's wisdom, and the ongoing invitation into the story (apologetics, evangelism, theology). Apologetics, then, is reimagined to move out of traditional confines and into the space of the enchanted, with the intent of offering light, possibility, and hope.

Taken together, *Lived Narrative Apologetics* contends that it is a means of meeting the problem of secular, post-Christian enchantment through the dynamic, intrusive way of Jesus made flesh by the work of the Holy Spirit through the church collectively and individually. This project will work to explicate that way.

This chapter has aimed to consider the formative texts that have been important in shaping the project of Lived Narrative Apologetics. The authors considered have influenced the contours of Lived Narrative Apologetics through their projects, leading to ideas that form the thesis and definitions shared throughout this chapter and those to follow. In the next chapters, this project will develop the abovementioned aspects to explain that Lived Narrative Apologetics emerges from The Greater Narrative of God. This chapter will significantly further engage N.T. Wright. In Chapter Three, the project will offer a robust definition of Lived Narrative Apologetics from the Bible foundation of Luke-Acts. In Chapter Four, this project will consider

the practical application of Lived Narrative Apologetics through examining the model being practiced by Jesus and Paul, proposing a taxonomy for how disciples today can practice this suggested model of practical apologetics. Finally, this project will conclude with some principles of apologetics recognized in the life and practice of Lived Narrative Apologetics from Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

CHAPTER 2

THE GREATER NARRATIVE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The objective of Chapter Two is to argue that Lived Narrative Apologetics is practiced through the disciple's awareness of The Greater Narrative, out of which he/she lives, and which establishes the point in time where the story of God continues and one's personal story finds its relevance. To accomplish this aim, this chapter will explore how N.T. Wright¹ developed his argument in *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* by regarding the biblical story as a five-act play, with Christians being called to improvise the concluding Act. This argument was further developed from a previous argument in chapter 5 of *The New Testament and the People of God*.² Engaging Wright's argument will offer a hermeneutic lens to conceptualize the premise that Jesus and the disciples were aware of the greater story they lived within and that they lived out their portion of the story of God.³

The argument is that the story of Jesus and the disciples in Luke-Acts is a part of an ongoing narrative of redemption. This chapter puts forth that Acts 1:1-8 is the continued missional agenda of God that is developed through Jesus to the apostles and is manifest in the

¹ N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (United States: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013).

² *Ibid.*, XI.

³ This concept will be developed with N.T. Wright's 5 Acts hermeneutic. Additionally, the point is to establish the bridge for the apologetic elements of living in and living out one's place in the story. Said differently, the point is that our lives have the same capacity to compel and shape others through our story, and living that story is comprehensive.

church.⁴ This chapter will develop the importance of seeing Lived Narrative Apologetics within The Greater Narrative of Judeo-Christian Scripture, the story of God. Additionally, Wright's work will explicate that The Greater Narrative represents God's story in Scripture, which is purposed to reveal the renewal project for humanity. This also affects belief and behavior and is, therefore, the means to offer God's solution to the human condition.⁵

The continuation of the story of God was essentially understood by the ones in the story, as evidenced by Scripture and recorded providential actions of God in unfolding the story.⁶ Acts is a continuation of the actions of Jesus through the disciples. The Greater Narrative will be explained, as well as its significance to Lived Narrative Apologetics. Again, Lived Narrative Apologetics is practiced through the disciple's awareness of The Greater Narrative. The argument is that when one understands The Greater Narrative, it serves as a personal hermeneutic. By hermeneutic, we mean a process of interpreting reality and other narratives that compete with one's existence.⁷ If one properly understands the story of God, they, in turn, apprehend where they are in the story of humanity. It will be argued that the impact of the story (The Greater Narrative) challenges other stories and is intrinsically a sort of worldview that one functions from, affecting belief and imagination while offering a means to process the value of

⁴ Acts 1:8 indicates progress through the geographical locations, cultural differences, and political challenges, as well as practical problems of growth and fears within the community of believers.

⁵ The human condition is fallenness, but it is also captivity. Cultural captivity and Charles Taylor's *Secular Age* articulate this best.

⁶ This point will be developed more fully later in the chapter.

⁷ This definition is coined from the N.T. Wright's "Knowledge" in *The New Testament and The People of God: Christian Origins and The Question of God*, Volume 1.

other stories.⁸ This effect is also why The Greater Narrative is a grounding and developing story (the narrative develops the disciple as the disciple grows in awareness and familiarity of the narrative).

To accomplish this chapter's aim, we will demonstrate how The Greater Narrative affects belief by exploring the power of story and how this contributes to the apologetic intentions of Lived Narrative Apologetics. We will then consider a model to explain The Greater Narrative by examining the work of N. T. Wright. Next, this chapter will examine The Greater Narrative as an overall story and offer a taxonomy to understand The Greater Narrative as illustrated in the Luke-Acts narrative. The conclusion of this section will put forth that Jesus was aware of The Greater Narrative and lived within it progressively; it is ultimately a story of love.

THE GREATER NARRATIVE AFFECTS BELIEF

How does a lived story influence a counter-narrative to join its tenets? The answer is that it must address one's beliefs. This project argues the disciple is aware they are living in a narrative that offers the means of re-storying another's story through the interaction of reading

⁸ Wright, *New Testament People God VI*, 37. This sort of exchange is what Wright would describe as Critical Realism. Wright explains that critical realism is a way of describing the process of 'knowing' that acknowledges the reality of the thing known as something other than the knower (hence 'realism') while also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiraling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence 'critical') (35). Later in his text, he adds to this project's aim of story or narrative interacting with another's saying, "Critical realism (as I am proposing it) sees knowledge of particulars as taking place within the larger framework of the story or worldview which forms the basis of the observer's way of being in relation to the world" (37).

and being read.⁹ This dynamic exchange presupposes that there is an overarching story by which belief and behavior are affected: The Greater Narrative. In addition to understanding where the disciple is in time, one is also aided by The Greater Narrative to affect the beliefs of those one engaged by that narrative. The Greater Narrative affects belief in at least five ways.

One way belief is affected is by the notion that their life is lived under the conviction of mission, given by “the story.” In this sense, The Greater Narrative is a drumbeat that forms purpose as the disciple actively participates in God’s ongoing agenda for the world; this is much like a witness. To this ideal, Trevin Wax, in *Eschatological Discipleship*, treats this aspect of story as worldview and contends that it creates a sense of mission.¹⁰ Wax, entering the conversation with N.T. Wright’s critique of worldview (further developed later), would note that *worldviews provide the stories through which human beings view reality*: “narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview going more profound than the isolated observation or fragmented remark.”¹¹ It is maintained here that life expression is the missional tone of life in the tension of The Greater Narrative.

A second way belief is affected is that The Greater Narrative gives sensibility and understanding to one’s life and frames one’s worldview or lenses by which life is lived. This

⁹ By re-storying, we mean what Wright argues and will be further developed later. Wright holds that the story’s authority can wield the power to change how people think and behave – in other words, story can exercise power and authority. A lived story has the capacity to do the same, thus “re-storying” one’s thinking and behavior. Story and narrative are used interchangeably in this project. It is also held that narrative and story affect how we live, speak, and communicate and that one’s existence expresses the narrative by which they are directed.

Furthermore, like story, the disciple’s lived story is read, heard, studied, and observed by the watching world. To this end, Wright notes that “A story told (in the case of this project, lived) with pathos, humor, or drama opens the imagination and invites readers and carriers to imagine themselves in similar situations, offering new insights about God and human beings which enable them then to order their own lives more wisely.” The parenthetical statement was added.

¹⁰ Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 17-20.

¹¹ Wright, *New Testament People*, Volume 1, 123.

offers the means to do life while understanding “what time it is.” For disciples of Jesus, we argue that The Greater Narrative establishes one’s worldview, but it should be noted that a compelling worldview answers five primary questions: “Who are we?” “Where are we?” “What is wrong?” “What is the solution?” Moreover, “what time is it?”¹² These two effects on belief underwrite the capacity of story to shape behavior.

Trevin Wax’s earlier note helps give more context to Wright and Wax’s earlier interaction. Wax argues that one of the functions of a worldview is to provide answers to the fundamental questions of life, but this section aims to use the notion of The Greater Narrative to be in concert with the concept of worldview. Especially in that the narrative one lives under or by can shape one’s existence. Wax argues there are some things that one’s worldview keeps in mind, i.e., the whole scope of time, but it ought to also develop an understanding of the now. In his critique of Wright, he would argue that the question “what time is it?” clarifies the shape of worldview thinking and keeps someone from losing the critical “this world” dimension of discipleship. *This question (“what time is it?”) situates people not only in the world – a place in space – but also a cultural moment – a place in time.* Wax argues that this is the ability of a disciple to situate themselves within the world that they live. We are affected by time and cannot conceive of ourselves as being timeless beings. Wright argues that the question allows us to understand the hermeneutical value of the narrative that we live. For Wright, The Greater Narrative is grounded in Judeo-Christian Scripture (A Biblical Narrative). It allows the disciple to understand what Act (as will be discussed in his 5 Act hermeneutic) they are within while they live and, therefore, makes sense of the reality in which they live. Wright is aware that everyone

¹² Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 14-20.

lives from a particular worldview (for him, a narrative/story), which is in tension to establish a better story under which to live.¹³

A third way belief is affected is because the narrative is redemptive in nature. The Greater Narrative of Scripture is redemptive and, therefore, a re-storying story that captivates the reader's imagination, allowing them to reimagine life from the script of another story. N. T. Wright, in *Scripture and The Authority of God*, argues that stories can wield power to change how people think and behave – in other words, they can exercise power and authority. He says, “A familiar story told with a new twist in the tale jolts people into thinking differently about themselves and the world.”¹⁴ This ability is especially significant in the notion of a living story. The story of God is an authoritative one that affects change.¹⁵ It is necessary to be aware and realize oneself in the story that influences all others, bringing clarity and conviction in the now. This holistic need is how Jesus functioned.

Jesus lived in The Greater Narrative in fulfillment of the agenda of heaven. Redemption is re-storying by nature.¹⁶ Gospel, the good news, has historically meant “a better story.”¹⁷ Jesus lived in the narrative of the gospel, or the story of salvation, and He knew of it from the beginning of his ministry until the end. Luke captures that awareness and maintains that Jesus lived within the tension of a greater narrative. This greater narrative gave formation to the story

¹³ Ibid., 14-20.

¹⁴ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 25.

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶ See Acts 2:36-41.

¹⁷ According to Bruce, in the New Testament, the Gospel primarily conveys the message of liberation, but sometimes, by natural association, it is used to describe the proclamation of the message. At other times, however, the word seems to take on a fuller significance: the gospel as an ongoing entity, as the power of God, affecting the salvation of those who believe the message, as something approaching the sum of Christian faith and life (3).

He lived within/told and His means of inviting others into the story of God.¹⁸ His disciples would join Him in telling the story through the lives under full awareness of such. Luke-Acts captures the hinge that swings from Jesus to the church, thus marrying the model of Christ and the continuation of Jesus followers (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39,41; 13:31; 14:17; 22:15; 22:20; 23:11; 26:16). The historical work of Luke in Acts abundantly records the witnessing efforts of the disciples of Jesus. By witness, we mean that these were disciples who were able and ready to testify of a person or a thing, in favor of whom or what one bears testimony (John 3:26; 5:33; 18:37). To bear witness is to testify to the truth of what one has seen, heard, or knows.¹⁹

The word witness has an additional valuable meaning for our consideration here, meaning to witness to facts in the legal sphere. The proper sphere of μάρτυς is legal, where it denotes one who speaks from personal experience about actions in which he took part, and which happened to him or about persons and relations known to him. He may be a witness at a trial or, in legal transactions of different kinds, a solemn witness in the most varied connections.²⁰ The witness and storyteller have a dual nature in Luke's Acts history. The narrative was lived in a manner that communicated life-changing capacity, and those who did swear by its ability to do as much.

¹⁸ Bruce argues that Luke contends that Jesus was doing precisely what the Lord's anointed was destined to do; he was beyond doubt the coming one. It seems that Bruce is arguing that Jesus was fully aware of his destiny of being good news made manifest. Bruce demonstrates the fulfillment of Isaiah 61 captured in Luke 4:16- 21; 3:21- f.; 1-4.

¹⁹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

²⁰ Hermann Strathmann, "Μάρτυς, Μαρτυρέω, Μαρτυρία, Μαρτύριον, Ἐπιμαρτυρέω, Συμμαρτυρέω, Συνεπιμαρτυρέω, Καταμαρτυρέω, Μαρτύρομαι, Διαμαρτύρομαι, Προμαρτύρομαι, Ψευδόμαρτυς, Ψευδομαρτυρέω, Ψευδομαρτυρία," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 476.

A fourth way belief is affected is in the fact that The Greater Narrative gives shape to the disciple's purpose. The Greater Narrative is a historical story that moves from the beginning of human history and crescendos with Christ and the church. Luke grounds history for the Christian while casting a vision for the future in Luke 24:44-49, indicating that the renewal project would begin in Jerusalem. The story of God in Christ Jesus would first be told in Jerusalem, where God would offer the world repentance and remission of sin: "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 'You are witnesses of these things.'"²¹

When the disciple is aware of The Greater Narrative, they realize the purpose it establishes for them to live in the narrative, continuing what God has begun through Jesus. This continuation, however, is designed to be actualized in the life of the storyteller/disciple. Thus, the disciple lives life both within the story and as a continuation of the story of God.

A fifth way is that The Greater Narrative shapes one's sense of promise, thus affecting belief. This notion of promise is an answer to the human condition, a solution both now and to the question of "what is wrong?" Furthermore, "how can what is wrong be made right?" Luke-Acts describes the promise as being given in Jesus. Jesus is the solution, the promised solution of The Greater Narrative.

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a

²¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Lk 24:46-48.

prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.²²

Jesus, the Christ, is the story’s hero and healing agent (Acts 2:36; 3:19-20; 4:10-12; 4:33; 5:30-32, 42; 8:12; 9:20-22; 10:36; 13:23; 15:11; 16:31; 17:1-3; 18:5; 20:24; 28:23, 30-31).²³

Jesus captures promise in two dimensions. First, He is promised as the expectation of the story from the origin to the climax (Gen. 3:15-Acts 3:22). Second, *He is the promise who brings the correcting power of God to the world. God makes right what is wrong with the world* in at least two ways. *Luke records Peter, who teaches that God has sent Jesus to wipe sin away and give times of refreshing.* By sin, we mean to not only include the spiritual connotation of missing the mark, rebellion against God, and the acts that separate us from God, but we also mean the life cancer of the human condition, the disease that denies the best version of humanity, “life out of order.” *Jesus offers humanity the means of righting the wrong of sin and thus the blessing of ordered living.* In his writing, *City of God*, Saint Augustine describes this blessing as virtue, or perfect love of God. The promise of Jesus gives humanity back the virtue (ordered life) that has been lost.²⁴

But living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things: *to love things, that is to say, in the right order, so that you do not love what is not to be loved or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a*

²² *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 3:18–26.

²³ These passages are central to the historical pattern of Jesus as the story’s central figure. The New Testament would also demonstrate the same emphasis. The promise of the story was wrapped in the person of Jesus and would be perpetuated by the followers of his way, the church.

²⁴ Saint Augustine. *City of God*, XV 23.

*lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally.*²⁵ (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.27-28)

Augustine's conception of loving things in the wrong order is perhaps one of the most dynamic ways sin has assaulted the abundant life offered by God (John 10:10). Such backward and reprobate behavior leads to restlessness. A good thing is still a created thing, and when God is not ordering life, the creature will miss the intention of its design. Jesus offers humanity the choice to live under the privilege of one's true image (John 1:12; Genesis 1:26-27; Ephesian 2:10). This, theoretically, is where "lived narrative" is dynamically expressed by the storyteller in the conceptualization of living within a narrative that has the capacity/power to shape belief and behavior, thus re-storying others, *re-narratizing* another's current life narrative, by the promise of Jesus.

The Greater Narrative captures the seminal point that Jesus fully explains "turning" in the renewal project. God wants the human to reclaim and recover all that the enemy has viciously and malevolently stolen. Everything lost to the enemies of Satan, sin and self, Jesus gives back. This promise is perhaps best expressed as "Hope,"²⁶ hence Peter's appeal to "save yourselves!"²⁷ Apologetics is lived most scripturally consistent when disciples have modeled the promises of God in all conditions of life and fostered relational bridges with another person in such a way that those people desire to know how they have hope in such perilous occasions.

²⁵ Saint Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*, I.27-28.

²⁶ Apologetics is lived most scripturally consistent when disciples have modeled the promises of God in all conditions of life and fostered relational bridges with another person in such a way that those people desire to know how they have hope in such perilous occasions. This may be where Peter's foundational thinking germinated in his later epistles. Here, we find grounding for his theology that establishes the seedbed for the widespread use of *apologia*.

²⁷ See Acts 2:40.

The promise of Jesus creates grounding to The Greater Narrative's expectation and hope for renewal in Jesus as "The One" who rights what has been wronged in the human condition from the fall. *The storytelling disciple lives in awareness of The Greater Narrative's capacity to explain promise and enhance one's life. This awareness shapes the meaning of being renewed. This renewal is reinforced by The Greater Narrative's ability to determine principles and character-shaping truths by which to live.* It is out of this Greater Narrative that Lived Narrative Apologetics is practiced.²⁸ THE APOLOGETIC PRACTICE NECESSITATES A HERMENEUTIC TO NAVIGATE STORY-LIVING MORE DYNAMICALLY. N.T. WRIGHT OFFERS A PROCESS FOR THIS POINT.

N.T. WRIGHT ON THE GREATER NARRATIVE AS AN OVERALL STORY

The notion of The Greater Narrative, from which this project argues Lived Narrative Apologetics, is influenced by the work of N.T. Wright. Wright has several texts that explicate the notion of the larger narrative of the Bible, its authority, and its overall story. What follows is the summation of The Greater Narrative, using Wright's work to ground the concept. Then, the chapter will be developed by utilizing the 5-Act hermeneutic to trace the correlation and importance of Lived Narrative Apologetics in Luke-Acts to appreciate its importance and value for the church.

²⁸ The explanation of the apologetic practice will be further developed in the next chapter of this project.

Wright holds that the Bible, the Scripture, the narrative of God, and all its parts can best be described as story.²⁹ This story is authoritative in that it can bring the reader up to date and understand their existence (reality). The authority of the story can also wield the power to change how people think and behave – in other words, the story can exercise power and authority.³⁰ A lived story has the capacity to do the same, “re-storying” thinking and behavior.³¹

Wright notes, “A story told with pathos, humor, or drama opens the imagination and invites readers and carriers to imagine themselves in similar situations, offering new insights about God and human beings which enable them then to order their own lives more wisely.”³² We are arguing that Wright’s point is even more so the case when the story is lived and encountered through disciples who function out of awareness that they are a continuation of the narrative of God, or, as the Apostle Paul would argue, “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ...”³³

Lived narrative has the means to contest existing stories, offering clarity to the places where the lesser story is inconsistent and giving sight to where one’s narrative blinded them. For example, the Apostle Paul would contend he had full conviction the story he lived prior to meeting Jesus was superior, but he encountered a living narrative that moved him to abort his narrative.

So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion... Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise

²⁹ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 24.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

³¹ See earlier note for the meaning of re-storying.

³² *Ibid.*, 25.

³³ *New American Standard Bible*, 2 Cor 3:2–3.

the dead? So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities... And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me'... So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.³⁴

Paul's example (his testimony) in Acts is mentioned several times, illustrating the use of story to impact his life and God using his life as story. The narratives of Paul *tell his story while illustrating the power of story* (Acts 22:3-21; 24:10-21; 25:8-16; 26:2-29). It is a mixture of travel narratives and defense speeches and covers a full quarter of Acts, indicating its importance.³⁵ Bock writes, "This is the gospel: the offer of unbroken life with God to people of every nation through Jesus the Christ."³⁶ We see the story of God being consistent in God's aim to have life with His creation. Paul's life is used as God's story in the story to impact lesser narratives while defending God's project to bring order to lives that are out of order. As a living apologetic, Bock helps us to see "the apologetic here is more about the promise of God than

³⁴ Ibid., Acts 26:4-23.

³⁵ Spencer (2004: 212).

³⁶ Bock, Darrell L., *Acts* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Kindle Locations 15909-15916). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

about defending oneself before Rome.”³⁷ Witherington notes the speeches are forensic and, as such, defend the accused’s character. Paul’s story works as an apologetic to clarify the debris of confusion about Jesus and demonstrates the storyteller’s character through his life.³⁸ In total, Paul has been changed by the story he tells while extending the intent of the story being told by God. Carrying out God’s call with character is a core element of Paul’s defense.³⁹

Here, note Wright’s point that The Greater Narrative is written from the inner tension of sovereignty and expectation. The biblical writers live with the tension of believing God has always been sovereign over the world, and through the sovereignty, He must break into the world.⁴⁰ This tension undergirds the story and is embodied by the storytellers. The narrative is not only God’s story to save humans, but to renew the whole world.⁴¹ “This is the unfinished story in which readers of the scripture are invited to become actors in their own right.”⁴² In so, seeing the “acts” of Jesus began the process of fully stepping into the purpose of the story and is continued through the followers of Jesus as “actors in their own right,” who tell the story as storytellers.⁴³

The unfinished story continues what Jesus began to do and teach. Darrell L. Bock, in his commentary on Acts, discusses the naming of the historical work of Luke in Acts and offers a

³⁷ Ibid., “This is the first of three major defense speeches (24:10–21; 26:2–23 are the others).” Kindle Locations 15909-15916.

³⁸ *Witherington* (1998: 660–665).

³⁹ Bock, Darrell L.. *Acts* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Kindle Locations 15909-15916). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁰ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 27.

⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

⁴² Ibid., 27.

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

discussion that contributes to the notion of the continued story of God to the world. Concerning the name, Bock writes:

More appropriate would be “The Acts of the Sovereign God through the Lord Messiah Jesus by His Spirit on Behalf of the Way.” The apostles are not noted in this title because many others besides the apostles are the human agents in the book. “The Way” is mentioned because this is Luke’s most prominent title for the new movement. The title underscores the divine support for the new community God has formed and is expanding. The name also explains that the community’s identity is rooted in divine provision and promise and possessing a direction God points to on behalf of humanity.⁴⁴

It is this divine provision and promise that the church serves to be, using the language of N.T. Wright, “the final Act” for the world. The disciple steps into the scheme of redemption (God’s renewal project) and realizes the story by living it out and, in every encounter of their existence, sees life as an occasion in which “the story” re-stories another as an answer to the human condition. The Greater Narrative is God’s renewal project, in which we read about the purpose of God in the story. The story, then, conveys the Creator’s intent. The narrative, when lived, must demonstrate the author’s intent.

Scripture can cultivate life-changing conviction when it is understood that its (Scripture’s) role is not only to provide true information. However, it is taking an active part in the ongoing purpose of God to renew humanity.⁴⁵ Scripture exists by a means of God’s action in and through us – which will include, but go far beyond, the mere conveying of information.⁴⁶ It will be argued that Scripture reveals the information about the renewal project of God, which one must be aware of and realize, telling the story by living. This living of the story will shape

⁴⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 108.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

another and renew their existence as an answer from God, an apology of heaven in continuation of Jesus who did the same.

The renewal project, God “putting the world right,” indicates that God is addressing a problem: “the problem,” to be more concise.⁴⁷ The role of the story in Scripture, then, is to address the problem by allowing God’s Kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10). Wright argues that Kingdom becomes a sort of “portable” story in which one sees the affirmation that God will act with purpose to rescue His people and complete His work for creation.⁴⁸ To see The Greater Narrative as synonymous with scripture, it is argued that the story is where God is *revealed*, how God is *discussed*, and how God *announces* one is free.⁴⁹

Wright says, “Again and again, the point of scripture was that it addressed a fresh, prophetic word to Israel in the midst of its often very ambiguous ‘experience,’ breaking into Israel's own world of muddled and mistakes—doing, in fact, in verbal form what God himself was doing in breaking into the world, and into Israel's life, and judgment and mercy.”⁵⁰ Jesus’ teaching and dealings lived a story that made God known by the narrative He lived in and explicated.⁵¹ When story is lived by disciples, as a continued act of Jesus, the prophetic word “breaks into” the world again and again in human form, sharing the message of what God is doing to mend, restore, and answer.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 34-35.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 33-37.

⁵¹ See Luke 10; 15; 24.

According to Wright, the role of Scripture (The Greater Narrative) was a mechanism to equip God's people to serve His purposes.⁵² In essence, everything needed for the human condition was established in/through the platform of Scripture. The lived narrative, then, is demonstrably equal to Jesus, who maintained God's valid argument for the best life one could live. Jesus takes the narrative and, through His incarnation, breaks into the world, freshly, to fully illustrate the complete task of The Greater Narrative as one that establishes order, worship, wisdom, and means of a relational connection with God, otherwise understood as to be saved (Luke 19:10). God wrote the story to shape and direct the lives of His people.⁵³ According to Wright, the story was told to create familiarity with who God is and draw people into an awareness of life with God, captivating belief and behavior being purposed for God, making them join the story as storytellers.⁵⁴

As stated earlier, the Bible and all its various parts can best be described as a story,⁵⁵ one that is told as a divine drama unfolding in five acts.⁵⁶ This divine drama will be explored in the next section. Here, it is essential to consider that the objective of Lived Narrative Apologetics is carried out from the disciple's acceptance of The Greater Narrative as the story that Scripture tells. From this line of thought, it follows that the story of Scripture gives insight into a Judeo-Christian worldview. From this scriptural foundation, disciples are enabled to know where they are in the human condition and, subsequently, how to function considering that reality. Said

⁵² Ibid., 35.

⁵³ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38. God's narrative was written to shape and direct the life of God's people.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 122.

differently, disciples are given the capacity to navigate the human condition from the enlightenment of the overall story of God. The point is that one's means of navigating the human condition is through understanding how to live the story. To establish this point, Wright's model offers insight into how one acts in their age. Ultimately, we will argue that the point in Acts is that the Holy Spirit has been given so that the living Christ (re)lives the story within the church, not just individuals. Individuals, disciples, yes, but in the context of the community in which Christ lives out the story.⁵⁷

N. T. WRIGHT'S MODEL TO EXPLAIN THE GREATER NARRATIVE

The Greater Narrative of Lived Narrative Apologetics is the story of God. The Greater Narrative represents God's story in Scripture, which is purposed to reveal the renewal project for humanity.⁵⁸ As argued by Wright, this story affects belief and behavior. It has the power to compel humanity to embrace the restorative, liberating agenda of God to regain what was stolen and destroyed at the fall.⁵⁹ This story is the overarching narrative of God, making sense of the human condition from the fall to Jesus and from Jesus to the church even to now.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ This point will especially be developed in subsequent chapters as the apologetic emphasis that will be made argues that Jesus personally upset the worldview of Saul of Tarsus, but through The Way, the church. The interplay of Christ as the church and the church as Christ is undeniable in the narrative of Acts 9.

⁵⁸ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W., *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 13.

⁵⁹ See Genesis 3:1-15; Eph.1; John 10:10; Romans 15:4; Is. 40; Is. 52-53; John 1:12-14.

⁶⁰ See Luke 24:44-49; Mathew 1:1-21.

In *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*,⁶¹ Craig G.

Bartholomew and Michael W. Gohoen articulate that the biblical story moves toward rescue.⁶²

This story includes the creature within that story and that they must, respectively, find their place within it.⁶³ This story unfolds like a missional drama.⁶⁴

Lived Narrative Apologetics is a storytelling practice.⁶⁵ Lived Narrative Apologetics is apologetics reimagined,⁶⁶ which compels the reader to step into the narrative with God's good news to renew (make right) what has been lost, salvaging and realizing the best version of one's life through the person of Jesus. Disciples live an unfolding story that has called every participant into the story to find their place in the drama. *Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that Christianity is the culminating effort of the drama that makes sense of all other stories while*

⁶¹ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W., *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014). The authors write, "We have also borrowed from Wright his helpful metaphor of the Bible as drama. But whereas Wright speaks of five acts (creation, sin, Israel, Christ, church), we tell the story in terms of six acts" (14).

It should be noted that Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh were the first to add a sixth act to N. T. Wright's five-act analogy. Cf. *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 182.

⁶² Ibid., 13.

⁶³ Ibid., 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 14, 22.

⁶⁵ It should again be emphasized that Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that one is aware of The Greater Narrative of which they live and are storied (shaped) by it, thus allowing life to be lived in the tension of what God has done and what God is actively doing in the life of disciples. One lives in that awareness and the narrative is realized in each moment and encounter as a providential moment or occurrence, a place where the story can be told, where the apology can be made as the watching world reads a disciple. These encounters confront other stories (other life narratives) and critique other stories by the comprehensive superiority of The Greater Narrative, which culminates in Jesus and, through relational living (robust discipleship), conveys a better story that has the potential to re-story (demolish the worldview of) the reader.

⁶⁶ The Scripture is taken as being actualized as disciples live with the awareness that one is in the story that can re-story another and is missioned to do just that. The apologetic intention is the reimagined lived narrative that allows the life of the storytelling disciple to make the argument of heaven alive and tangible through the story being lived before a watching world, offering the answer to humanity's greatest hurts.

*making the best case for God through the person of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, and as part of His church.*⁶⁷

Wright's texts demonstrate a model for reading the Bible, which is repurposed to be a model for understanding The Greater Narrative and how one is living within it.⁶⁸ This section works to see the drama depicted in five acts, which move from the period of the patriarchs through the Christian age until now. As a hermeneutic, it allows the reader to understand "what time it is" in Scripture. As a taxonomy for The Greater Narrative to practice Lived Narrative Apologetics, it allows the storyteller to live the narrative better and practice a nimble exposition of the story in word and deed while remaining clear about what has been, what is, and what is to come. It additionally allows one to invite the reader to take their place in the acts of Jesus continued through the storytelling disciples of Christ, the church.

*Wright explains The Greater Narrative (as we are arguing here).*⁶⁹

1. Act One is creation. This part of the story is captured in Genesis 1-2 and is an anchor for the origin of the universe, humanity, and the "good" of it. This act depicts an origin story and the picture of what God desires to reclaim, the "genesis" of life. Wright says, "We read it as the first act in a play of which we live in the fifth."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See earlier note on the work of The Holy Spirit through the church.

⁶⁸ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 117-128.

⁶⁹ N.T. Wright., *The New Testament and the People of God* (Fortress Press,1992). N. T. Wright, "How to Get Back on Track," In *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, 115-142. United States: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

2. Act Two is the fall, Genesis 3-11, and describes the world's first cataclysmic expression of fallenness. With the fall, the first messianic promise was made.⁷¹ The curse is chronicled, the flood, the evil of humanity, and their potential and practical ugliness as humankind left to themselves grows evermore deplorable. Wright says, "We read it as the second act in a play of which we live in the fifth."⁷²
3. Act Three is the entire story of Israel from Abram to Messiah (Genesis 12 to the Gospels).⁷³ Act three's age describes the governance of God over man through the fathers (patriarchs) to the giving of the law and work of the prophets, as well as the time of the kings. This act describes the divided kingdom, the silence of the prophets, and the awaited coming of John the Baptist as a forerunner of Jesus, who enters the waiting world.⁷⁴ Wright says, "We read it as the third act."⁷⁵
4. Act Four is Jesus. Wright describes this act as the time when we watch Jesus lay the foundation for the fifth act; the story captures all that Jesus "did and taught" (Acts 1:1). "When we read the story of Jesus, we are confronted with the decisive and climactic fourth act..."⁷⁶ We see Jesus' healing, teaching, feeding, loving, listening, living, accepting, forgiving, among the brokenhearted, doing life with the lonely, and walking out the story of heaven for the world to see. As told in John 1:14, He was beheld laying

⁷¹ See Genesis 3:15.

⁷² Ibid., 124-125.

⁷³ Here Wright's emphasis is anchored on the historical work of Paul who sketches the time in Galatians three and Romans four.

⁷⁴ See Malachi 4:5-6.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 125.

down His life and taking it up again. This notion is recapitulated in the church's life through the Spirit in Act 5.

5. Act Five is New Testament Christianity. This is “our present act.”⁷⁷ This act is to presuppose all the above and be conscious of living as the people through whom the narrative in question is now moving toward its final destination.⁷⁸ About this act, Wright says, “Indeed, telling the story of Jesus as the climax of the story of Israel and the focal point of the story of the creator's redemptive drama with his world is itself a major task of the fifth act...”⁷⁹

Wright's hermeneutic model is distinguished as a framework to appreciate the story of God.⁸⁰ It additionally allows disciples to demonstrate a livable worldview practice for understanding “what time it is.”⁸¹ In his earlier work, Wright developed his argument: “seeing the biblical story as a five-act play, with ourselves called to improvise the concluding act.”⁸² This improvisation is the work of the Holy Spirit through His church in a given locale at a specific time. In *Scripture and The Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, he aims to reinforce that earlier work and argue that followers of Jesus Christ regarded the ancient Israelite scriptures as having reached a climactic fulfillment in Jesus, generating the “new covenant.” The prologue

⁷⁷ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁸¹ See earlier note on Trevin Wax.

⁸² Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 121-143.

sets the scene, putting the discussion about the Bible into its context within church history and contemporary culture.⁸³ The purpose is to consider how Wright's work moves in current culture as a framework to live The Story of God, the Scriptures.

Some resemblances and distinctions need to be considered through the works of N.T. Wright and Kevin J. Vanhoozer to appreciate how they contribute to this project's aim.⁸⁴ For instance, Vanhoozer argues that our roles in "acting" are facilitated by the script, given by God as compelling witnesses.⁸⁵ Vanhoozer argues that the economy of truth terminates not in conclusion, but in us. We realize Scripture's truth the way a musician realizes a score, or an actor realizes a script.⁸⁶ On this idea, Vanhoozer and Wright are similar in the term "actor." However, they are different in their application of the Scripture and its application (how disciples continue in it). For Wright, *improvisation* is used regarding how disciples are to continue in the

⁸³ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 115-142.

⁸⁴ This section aims to see some interaction with the major contributors of its thinking to appreciate the distinction offered regarding the idea of living in the narrative. The goal of this chapter is to highlight The Greater Narrative, God's story in scripture, and then see how disciples are invited into the narrative to live both in continuation and as the apology of God for the watching world. Kevin J. Vanhoozer's "Sapiential Apologetics" model in concert with N.T. Wright's framework for scripture is essential in the argument for Lived Narrative Apologetics, that disciples are in God's story, a living narrative/story that has the means of shaping/re-storying another's life narrative.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 238. **Vanhoozer argues that the economy of truth terminates not in conclusion but in us.** We realize Scripture's truth the way a musician realizes a score or an actor's script (238). Here, he and Wright are similar in their references but different in the application of scripture and the application or continuation. For Wright, the term *improvisation* is used. Wright argues that this idea can work in the metaphor of music and theater. The way that it is realized is the same in both. The musician and the actor must be familiar with the music played (the musician) or the acts that preceded them (the actor) before they improv. These preceding works "form the parameters for appropriate improvisation in the reading of scripture and the announcement and living out of the gospel it contains" (127). Wright's point seems to be primarily on the disciple seeing themselves walking to Act 5 of the framework of understanding scripture.

Vanhoozer's point is that discipleship formation is the embodiment of divine wisdom. "Each person is a member of the company of performers charged with acting out what is in Christ...one who knows how to live out union and communion in Christ...a lived demonstration of the truth" (249).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

Scriptures.⁸⁷ Wright argues that the idea can work in music and theater metaphors.⁸⁸ The way that it is realized is the same in both.

The notion of “improvising” is important, but sometimes misunderstood. As all musicians know, improvisation does not at all mean a free-for-all where “anything goes,” but precisely a discipline and careful listening to all the other voices around us, and constant attention to the themes, rhythms, and harmonies of the complete performance so far, the performance which we are now called to continue...The music so far, the voices around us, the ultimate multi-part harmony of God's new world: these take together, form the parameters for appropriate improvisation in the reading of scripture and the announcement and living out of the gospel it contains... No Christian, no church, is free to play out of tune. To change the metaphor back to the theater... No actors, no company, is free to improvise their own fresh scenes. No actor, no company, is free to improvise scenes from another play, or one with a different ending. If only we could grasp that we would be on the way to a healthy and mutually respectful living under the authority of scripture.⁸⁹

Notice Wright’s distinction that the musician and the actor must be familiar with the music that has been played (the musician) or the acts that preceded them (the actor) before they improvise. This project argues that this supports the notion of one being aware of The Greater Narrative that establishes life and the narrative one is invited into while living the narrative (their improvisation) shaped by the story. Wright argues that these preceding works (for the disciple, Acts 1-4) “form the parameters for appropriate improvisation in the reading of scripture and the announcement and living out of the gospel it contains.”⁹⁰ Wright’s point seems to be primarily on the disciple seeing themselves walking into Act 5 of the framework of understanding Scripture.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 127.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, as mentioned in chapter one's discussion on "sapiential apologetics,"⁹¹ holds that Scripture is the script we live by as actors in God's drama.⁹² About drama, Vanhoozer quotes Ford, who says, "At its best, drama can embrace the objective and the subjective, to maintain a sense of plot and purpose without suppressing the individuality, diversity, and the complexity of levels, perspectives, motivations, and ideas."⁹³ Vanhoozer emphasizes the discipleship formation from one's progressive awareness of Scripture that allows one to offer the embodiment of divine wisdom: "Each person is a member of the company of performers charged with acting out what is in Christ...one who knows how to live out union and communion in Christ...a lived demonstration of the truth."⁹⁴

As noted earlier, Vanhoozer is correct that an apologetic who meets man with the wisdom of God allows man to see the ongoing demonstration of Jesus incarnate through disciples who perpetuate "an active witness to Christian wisdom,"⁹⁵ or lived narrative. Vanhoozer would contend that, for the disciple, the value of our veneration of God is given relevance by one's life being a complete sacrifice to God, a reasonable expression, "a compelling witness to it."⁹⁶

As fully functional disciples, one can contend for the "holy life" and one's "whole life" being committed to someone and something more significant than oneself (Luke 9:23-26). As

⁹¹ Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition*, 217–250.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 228.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 223. See also Ford, *Future of Christian Theology*, 26.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

ambassadors, we actualize the mandate to represent God partnering in the reconciliation mandate, and modeling Jesus to the world (2 Corinthians 5:14-20). As selfless followers, disciples embrace the notion that dying to live is very much like Christ (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 2:20; 4:19; 5:24; 6:14; Ephesians 3:10; 4:13; John 1:12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21). To this notion, Vanhoozer writes, “There is an everyday martyrdom of life, as well as the extraordinary martyrdom of death. The apologetic task is not simply to recite but to embody one’s argument, not simply to proclaim but to become truth. Martyrdom—living (and if necessary, dying) in ways that testify to what is in Christ—is a powerful form of truth-disclosing action.”⁹⁷

The Greater Narrative is the overarching story that is told dramatically and ends with a final act that includes the disciple, who lives out the story in their now. When these truths are taken as a whole, the disciple’s life is *in* the story of God, *under* that overall story, and shaped *by* that story. This story, which is metaphorically described as The Divine Drama, or The Scriptures, has compelling power that impacts others as it is told (through the life lived, through actual communication, through the wisdom it displays in the human condition, and so forth) and results in the captivating, compelling, and restoring (a change of life narrative) of the non-Christian, while equipping (developing the Christian competence) the Christian.⁹⁸

Considering the work of Vanhoozer and Wright, this project would contend that their works do not go far enough. Wright stops with the notion that disciples (and therefore the story of God) are in the 5th Act. He writes, “It is an essential part of authentic Christian discipleship both to see the New Testament as the foundation for the ongoing (and still open-ended) fifth Act and to recognize that it cannot be supplanted or supplemented.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid., 242.

⁹⁸ Again, Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that one is aware of The Greater Narrative out of which they live and are storied (shaped), thus allowing life to be lived within the tension of what God has done and what God is actively doing in the life of disciples. See earlier note on the implications of this awareness.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 126.

Vanhoozer limits the awareness aspect of his argument; therefore, this project would contend that it must be additionally maintained that disciples have been invited into the ongoing manifestation of scripture, the ongoing incarnation of scripture, an actualized word.¹⁰⁰

The Christian church and every disciple that it consists of are in the story of God as its intended final Act, moving and meeting all who hear with the message of the Creator's redemptive drama; they do so fully aware and, in effect, realizing their life's chapter in the story. Their life's story captivates hearts, stirs imaginations, and challenges convictions and behaviors as hope takes shape through the vantage point of biblical, scriptural, and narrational lenses. The story forms disciples' lives, and their beliefs and behavior are the result of the story they live by, for, under, and within; their worldview, which is read by the watching world who, then are, ultimately, invited to realize their place in the story as storytellers, Jesus followers.

The fifth Act is where we exist, what time it is for the disciple now, and the insight that becomes especially necessary to realize the model of Lived Narrative Apologetics illustrated by Jesus. We need to illustrate that Jesus knew and was aware that he lived under, in, and by a narrative. As the prototype of Lived Narrative Apologetics, this chapter will now contend that Jesus practiced an awareness in which lived in the story that shapes others. The Luke-Acts account records proof of this awareness and illustrates his realization in his life and ministry.

APPLYING THE TAXONOMY TO LUKE-ACTS

Recalling the five-act model discussed above, we will consider several observations that ground the 4th Act (Jesus) and 5th Act (New Testament Christianity) of Wright's model. These examples solidify the practice of the narrative of God being lived by Jesus and continued through the disciples in their various situatedness.¹⁰¹ For our purposes here, it is maintained that Jesus was aware He was living the Story/Narrative of God, as argued above. Several examples will be offered to illustrate this notion.

¹⁰⁰ Vanhoozer's work is closer to the point of the Lived Narrative Apologetics, especially in his notes concerning the church being "demonstrations of the truth" (249) or "embodied wisdom" (231-233). Vanhoozer contends that "the best defense of the wisdom of the gospel is its practical demonstration in everyday speech and action. The apologist is an active witness to Christian wisdom" (231). Lived Narrative Apologetics finds tremendous value in this working hypothesis and would add that its means of shaping the life of another is limited in the successful practice of the "actors" or "Knights of the Lord's Table" (248). **This project would add to Sapiential Apologetics and 'The Five Act Model' that as the church becomes fully aware of the narrative of God, it offers power to shape lives in three ways. *One* is the disciple's awareness of the story and their place in it. *Two*, the life lived by transformative power of the story (Scripture, truth), and *three*, the Holy Spirit's partnership, and dynamic, providential, and powerful means to affect change in the seemingly ordinary everyday interactions with disciples today as evidenced in the history of Christianity offered by Luke-Acts.**

¹⁰¹ Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8 are textual hinges that bridge Jesus and the church in their awareness and action.

First, notice the hinge-like passages of the Luke-Acts work concluding the gospel and bridging into the historical Acts record (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8).¹⁰² These passages offer several points that illustrate the awareness of Jesus of the story He lived, the invitation to the witnesses to enter and continue, and additionally navigating The Greater Narrative's meaning from then (Old Testament) to now (New Testament).¹⁰³

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."¹⁰⁴

James R. Edwards, in *The Gospels according to Luke*, offers several important points to our observation here. In declaring that "everything must be fulfilled that is written about me" (v. 44), Jesus does not cite specific messianic proof texts. However, He does affirm the global witness of Israel's Scriptures to his messianic ministry.¹⁰⁵ Edwards is correct in that Luke does not point to any direct text. He aims to argue that Jesus is in The Greater Narrative and living as

¹⁰² Several Examples could be offered from Luke's Gospel that indicate that Jesus was aware of the story that he lived within, that he used the principles of that story to clarify other's life stories, and even that he compelled seekers toward a better story to live by. These examples offer more distinct turns from Luke to Acts and from Jesus to the church to keep the tension in the model offered by Wright, especially the 4th and 5th Acts. See Luke 10:25-37; 15:1-31; 18-19:10.

¹⁰³ As noted above, the story is one story and is better appreciated as such. For navigating references, the terms Old Testament and New Testament are used to navigate the Biblical text.

¹⁰⁴ Luke 24:44-49, NASB95

¹⁰⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 733.

a witness to the story's overall agenda for humanity. Edwards further says, "The witness is manifested variously: in the need of payment for sin, including sacrificial victims; the pervasive theme of suffering in the Psalter; the comprehensive testimony of the OT to God's mercy, love, and forgiveness of the penitent."¹⁰⁶

Similarly, Marshall notes, "The reference backwards is to his statements in 9:22, 44; 17:25; 18:31f.; 22:37, which were made concerning what The Son of man must undergo. The fulfillment of scripture is a divine necessity."¹⁰⁷ Marshall rightly articulates the almost assumed nature of Jesus' part in the story. Jesus is fulfilling what He knew He would fulfill, what He was in the story to live out. Marshall further adds commentary to aid in seeing Jesus' movement through Wright's hermeneutic model. From Marshall's note, we observe Jesus moving from Wright's 4 Act to the 5th Act in this discourse. He comments, "...now a new feature is added: the church's mission is also traced to scriptural prophecy, the interpretation of which is given by the risen Lord."¹⁰⁸ And later says, "But the Scripture can be fulfilled only if those equipped to attest the saving facts are sent out to proclaim the message in the power of the Spirit. Here, therefore, Jesus appoints them as his witnesses...since they have been able to see his death and can testify to his resurrection... Thus, the Gospel and Acts are linked together."¹⁰⁹ Edwards and Marshall both echo Jesus' dual awareness and the fact that His life was shaped by The Greater Narrative

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 733.

¹⁰⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 905.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 905.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 906.

of God, especially in the realization of his facing the cross with confidence. Edwards, as stated above, says that Jesus was a witness to the renewal project of God as given in prophecy.¹¹⁰

Second, notice that Jesus commissions the followers to live in the story to which they would bear witness.¹¹¹

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”¹¹²

Wright holds that “our task is to discover, through the spirit and prayer the appropriate ways of improvising the script between the foundation events and charter, on the one hand, and the complete coming of the kingdom on the other.”¹¹³ Perhaps this text was in his consideration as he arrived at this notion. Luke bridges the transition of Wright’s Acts 1-4 to Act 5 in one verse with several important programmatic implications for the church. Craig Keener, in *Acts*, offers some insight into the significance of the text.

Keener observes the above passage is one of Luke’s vital programmatic texts that echoes The Greater Narrative while serving as a bridge into the current program of God.¹¹⁴ Keener observes that several aspects of the story enable the storytellers, disciples, to take their place in this ongoing narrative. His work also highlights the means of the story being told to have

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 730-733.

¹¹¹ See the earlier point on the meaning of witness. Here, the work of Craig S. Keener will be explored to expand the point from the Acts 1:8 citation.

¹¹² New American Standard Bible, Acts 1:7–8.

¹¹³ Ibid., 126-127.

¹¹⁴ Craig S. Keener, *Acts* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: University Printing House, 2020), 105.

compelling and transformative power. That means this is the person of The Holy Spirit. Keener writes, “Like Luke’s other programmatic texts echoing Scripture (Luke 4:18-19; 24:45-48; Acts 2:17-18), 1:8 involves the Spirit empowering God’s agents for mission.”¹¹⁵ Keener observes that the Holy Spirit’s most recognized activity in the record of Acts is empowering witnesses for their mission.¹¹⁶ Throughout Luke’s work in Acts, The Holy Spirit is assisting the efforts of the disciples who are living in their place in the story of God as the continuation of the story to captivate the watching world towards a better narrative for living (Acts 1:8; 2:17-18; 4:8, 31; 7:51; 8:29, 39-40; 10:38; 11:12; 13:2, 4, 9; 16:6-7).¹¹⁷

Keener argues that the presence of The Holy Spirit is declared as a promise that the mission and efforts of the storytellers (disciples) would be successful.¹¹⁸ This observation is in harmony with the other gospels’ discussion of The Holy Spirit’s coming and work in and among the disciples. The means of the narrative being lived and capable of apologetic and evangelist success is not solely in the one living, but in the support and changing power of The Holy Spirit. According to Mathew and John’s Gospels, His coming was in the likeness of Jesus and with distinct supportive, changing power, offered to those witnesses who would step into the narrative and live out their place in the story (Mathew 28:20; John 14:25-26; 15:26-27, 16:5-11).¹¹⁹

Keener notes this promise of power was not exclusive (even though it may have been primary) to the apostles (Luke 24:33; 24:48; Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39; 41;13:31;

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 105.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 106.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 106.

22:15, 18, 20; 23:11; 26:16; Luke 21:13).¹²⁰ The promise would be available to all the disciples. Keener says, “They receive power (1:8; cf. 4:33; Luke 24:49), elsewhere associated with the Spirit (Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14; Acts 10:38).”¹²¹ Jesus was aware He was in the story of God and was empowered to accomplish that story. The apostles and disciples were made aware that they were entering the story of God to accomplish their part of the narrative and were given the power to affect narrational change to those to which they witness. Additionally, they used The Greater Narrative’s previous acts to tell their story.

The following three examples demonstrate that as they stepped into Act 5 of the story, they did so with the awareness of The Greater Narrative and allowed that story to shape the dynamic means they witnessed to the watching world around them. Additionally, we will consider the acts of the apostles as a preliminary introduction of storytelling in a Lived Narrative Apologetics manner that clarifies and critiques while sensibly bringing the reader into the now.¹²² Note the following abbreviations for Act One (Creation), Act Two (The Fall), Act Three (Israel), Act Four (Jesus), Act Five (New Testament Christianity): A1, A2, A3, A4, A5. With each of the following examples, Wright’s Five-Act hermeneutic is at play as the story is being told, making sense of the things of their now (the apostles and disciples on record) and clarifying The Greater Narrative act by act from time past.

First, Acts 2:22-36; 38-39. Here, note the apostles knew and practiced being storytellers in a manner that explained The Greater Narrative and why it was shaping the story they lived.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 106-108.

¹²¹ Cf. Micha 3:8; Zech 4:6; Romans 1:4; 15:13, 19; 1 Cor. 2:4; Eph. 3:16; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:7; LAB 27:10; Tg. Jon. On Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19.

¹²²A more robust definition of Apologetics will be offered in the following chapter. Here, we propose a simple apologetic meaning of clarifying Christian belief and answering critiques against the Christian worldview, and when appropriate, making an offensive case for Christianity.

Peter explains the promise made in **A2** (Acts 2:23) and developed in **A3** (Acts 2:25-34). Peter argues how the promises were fulfilled, and **A4** (Acts 2:36-38) points to Jesus and what He had done on the cross, while connecting the immediate audience to **A5**, offering them a renewal of their current story, and inviting them to take their place in The Greater Narrative as the ongoing appeal of heaven, the Kingdom come (Acts 2:38-42).

Second, notice Acts 3:17-26. Here, the promise of renewal was mentioned as being given through Abraham **A3** (3:25), the blessing was realized in Jesus **A4** (3:26), all the prophets proclaimed – looked for these days of **A5** (3:24) while they were in **A3**, a different age. The person of Jesus and His story was made sensible, clarified by the prophets here in **A3**, explaining **A4** as Peter preaches in **A5**. These examples show their awareness of The Greater Narrative, shaping their existence and calling while being formative to who they are as “storytellers,” Jesus followers, and Lived Narrative Apologetics as practitioners.

Third, Acts 13:16-46.¹²³ Again, notice the interplay of The Greater Narrative and its renewal aim at work as the apostles live in the story. Paul discusses the message of salvation (13:26) and who the promised Savior is (13:23), pointing to the promised time of **A3**. Here, the greater history of the Jews is brought to the story to establish the intentional work of God, which included their captivity (13:17-20) **A3**. The story uses David as the bridge to Jesus **A3-A4** (13:22-25). Although they have the work of all the prophets of **A3** (13:27), they did not understand what was coming in **A4** (13:27-31) and subsequently were given the chance to appreciate the story in the now **A5** (13:30-33). The promise of forgiveness is emphatically

¹²³ An interesting note about this example is the fact that the story is more definitively shared with “Israel” and a group entitled “you who fear God,” which seems generic as it is mentioned in this way twice (verses 16, 26) and as later in 13:46–48 it is strongly alluded that the Gentiles make up the group among the Jews that feared (reverence) God.

offered, which ultimately clarifies the return to what was lost in **A2** (13:38-39), having **A1** recreation-like status, while undergirding the reality that the interim time and the law **A3** could not offer what was only possible in Jesus **A4**. This spoken “word of God” (13:46) is the story that can re-story one’s story (13:48). The story is good news that is **A5** giving direction light to the nations and is the means of salvation.¹²⁴ Marshall describes that the intention of the missionaries included a global or all-nations aim of God, considering the prophetic scope of the narrative. The story was lived in and realized as the apostles in **A5** recognized the work of **A3** to explain the one of **A4**, while inviting the audience into **A5** with them. Marshall further explains the corrective power of The Story/Greater Narrative to explain how “she [Israel] failed to carry out the plan, has passed to Jesus and then to his people as the new Israel,” those restoring their story to fulfill God's ultimate narrative project.¹²⁵

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to consider The Greater Narrative and its authority, the story of scripture, Jesus in the story, and the church in the story. To this point, this chapter has developed this connection by establishing narrative as a story that undergirds how Jesus’ followers interpret and live life and mission. According to his hermeneutic model, Wright would describe this lived narrative as the fifth act of the story of God. Wright’s model allows one to see oneself in the story of Scripture and thereby understand how one lives within and correctly “tells the story” to another, with the aim of inviting them into the story.

¹²⁴ Marshall *Acts*, 230.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 230. Wright would call this the renewal project.

Additionally, it is contended that Jesus is the first model of Lived Narrative Apologetics, in which He was fully aware He lived in the story that re-stories another. Therefore, this realization shaped His belief and behavior to contribute to helping others reimagine their existence as they read the life He lived, or the story being told to enter it. The acts of Jesus are continued through the apostles and church, further establishing the methodology of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

Considering The Greater Narrative allows for more specific definitions of Lived Narrative Apologetics in the subsequent chapter. Chapter three will offer specific encounters in Acts that illustrate the corrective power of narrative. From these specific encounters, this project will isolate apologetic practices utilized for the cases that aid in the argument for apologetics, which must be reimagined. Reimagining apologetics¹²⁶ can occur when one accepts Jesus as a first model and appreciates His apologetic methodology to allow the narrative. He lived to captivate the reader and rescript them through His message of love, as it was lived before, preached to, demonstrated by service toward, and replicated in the church among them.

A watching and waiting world, then, sees hope lived out and is more inclined to ask “the reasons” (1 Pt. 3:15) for such hope, as they did with Peter and the rest of the apostles in Acts 2:37, and as the watching world did with Paul in Acts 16. Lived Narrative Apologetics establishes a dynamic motivation for disciples to live in a narrative that affects change in every aspect of their lives as the first Christians did. Life in the narrative is a catalyst to rescript a counter-narrative. The demonstration of the narrative through one’s life is how contrasting

¹²⁶ Apologetics and the notion of reimagining it will be developed in chapter three. Here, what is in mind is the conclusion note of chapter one.

worldviews are brought into renewal.¹²⁷ Wright holds that worldviews provide the stories through which human beings view reality.¹²⁸ The story captivates belief and shapes new behavior.¹²⁹ The story is an apology of God told by the life of Jesus and His followers.¹³⁰ We turn to this notion of apologetics in connection with a lived narrative and specific examples of it shaping belief and behavior.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 134-136.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 133.

CHAPTER THREE

DEFINING LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS

Chapter Two of this project suggested a taxonomy for explaining how disciples navigate life in The Greater Narrative of God—the works of N.T. Wright¹, Kevin J. Vanhoozer,² and Trevin Wax³ were especially noted to determine where the church finds itself in the story of God today. Chapter Three of this project aims to articulate Lived Narrative Apologetics as an apologetic expression for the church to the world. Here, we argue the church continues what Jesus, the Apostles, and the early disciples began, as recorded in Acts.⁴ This chapter will put forth that every local church is a local Christ, and the whole church is the universal Christ, functioning in awareness of the Greater Narrative of God; each disciple who makes up that church must be aware of that fact to affect the changing power of story/narrative in their context.⁵ This real story (God’s Gospel Narrative) is lived out in real lives in a real location and real-time, “known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter (the ongoing story, or word) of Christ.”⁶

¹ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 117-124.

² Vanhoozer, “Sapiential Apologetics: The Dramatic Demonstration of Gospel Truth,” 217-250.

³ Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 14-20.

⁴ See Acts 1:1-8.

⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, in “*Hocus Totus: The Elusive Wholeness of Christ*,” offers insight into appreciating the balance needed to see the metaphorical, mystical, and metaphysical aspects of the body of Christ at work. The point is that when the Greater Narrative is realized as a renewal project of God, the church and every disciple that makes it up must see their place in the story and the narrative as Christ’s continuation in the world. This actualization is the narrative of God lived out, resulting in Christ being made bodily in the world yet again.

⁶ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 2 Co 3:2–3. The parenthetical statement was added for emphasis on the point of living word.

Specific narratives in Acts will be treated to depict the corrective power of Lived Narrative Apologetics, as illustrated through robust discipleship in the church.⁷ The Lived Narrative Apologetics will be historically couched to realize it is contextual to the lived life in a certain time, through certain events, in a certain place. It will be necessary to offer a general overview of apologetics to appreciate the similarities and differences Lived Narrative Apologetics puts forth. Additionally, note that The Lived Narrative Apologetics is not primarily a generalized concept—though in some ways it is—but is predominantly a specified one, taking in a one-of-a-kind life lived in a one-of-a-kind space.

Though it is not the primary intent, some discussion must be made concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the Lived Narrative Apologetical practice of Jesus. The first Christian apologist was Jesus (and His disciples). Therefore, and considering the Luke-Acts history, respect must be given to the Holy Spirit regarding His presence in shaping the disciple's life through narrative and using that life as an argument for God to the world, both as it is read and as it reads the world.⁸ The disciple's life, conditioned by the Holy Spirit, inculcates the narrative, offering an appraisal, clarification, and communication of a better story and convincing proof or plausibility (through superior living).

Overall, Lived Narrative Apologetics is the awareness (one knows) and realization (one is living out/working) that the church and every disciple within is living in a story as the continuation of Christ and as Christ to the world; thus, it's a better story with power to shape

⁷ See Acts 8-9.

⁸ The following chapter will discuss the Holy Spirit's work in the church to continue all that Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1-4). The aim will be to appreciate the *entendre-like* duality of the way people and the way of Christ. It will be argued, briefly below and more directly in the next chapter, that the church is the extension of Christ; therefore, she must have the means of doing what Christ did. The Holy Spirit was promised and has the power to actualize this ability.

lesser stories. This premise insists on a grounding narrative. That grounding narrative is The Greater Narrative of God.

By Greater Narrative, we mean the story offered by God through the Scripture, which is the story of the whole world:⁹ the story that serves as the framework one perceives and experiences the world and from which contrasting stories may be challenged.¹⁰ The Greater Narrative includes the plot and map of knowledge necessary to understand reality as God would intend.¹¹ The Greater Narrative is indispensable to “make sense” of one’s life and reality.¹² The Greater Narrative is public truth that grounds a person and from which one observes to realize life according to what it is.¹³

This project argues that Lived Narrative Apologetics is grounded in the storytelling life of Jesus, who manifested God’s narrative to the world. This exhibition, a lived narrative, impacted those in the world of Jesus, re-storying them. Jesus lived and introduced the world to a

⁹ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of Scripture*, 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³ “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Then he told them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’ Luke 24:27, 44-47, 49 ESV.

Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that Jesus’ entire worldview was shaped by the Greater Narrative that gave him grounding and meaning to his story lived and from which he re-stories others. Each encounter was addressed from the narrative and answered according to the narrative. This practice would be the very means by which Jesus’ disciples would live in the narrative as the argument and answer of heaven in continuation of what Jesus did and taught. Note especially here that it is argued that Jesus’ overall life narrative was from creation to the cross. The disciple follows the storyline from the cross to the new creation.

better story that makes sense of all others; this narrative, this story, is The Greater Narrative of God.¹⁴ Jesus was fully aware of The Greater Narrative, which includes the story of His existence and the narrative of God’s intentions for man through Him, which Scripture calls “gospel.”¹⁵ Jesus actualizing the overarching story in His awareness and daily living is how The Greater Narrative serves the purpose of Lived Narrative Apologetics. Several distinct points are included here.

First, The Greater Narrative articulates the redemptive aim of God. The whole intent of the Scriptures is aimed toward the renewal project of God. The Greater Narrative reminds the disciple of God’s intent to reclaim, renew, and re-story what has gone wrong with humanity.

Second, The Greater Narrative establishes the personal story from which one lives, a worldview that shapes and stabilizes the disciple. The life of the disciple is within the tension of being shaped by the wisdom of God, which allows the disciple to become a “storyteller” for God, especially in the story of renewal. The goal of being invited into the story is to be re-storied to engage the narrative of another. In *Eschatological Discipleship*, Trevin Wax argues this notion by suggesting that disciples should ever be reminded that they live under the reality of knowing “what time it is” in their place in the story.¹⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, in *The New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, contends that disciples, as apologists, live in the wisdom of God and serve to be the “knights” of the narrative of God.¹⁷ N.T. Wright articulates the concept best, concluding that The Greater Narrative is incomplete unless one understands its intent to point to Jesus as

¹⁴ See Luke 24:44-49; 27-49.

¹⁵ See Luke 3:18; 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; 16:16. This continued emphasis is seen by Jesus’ disciples as well. See Acts 8:4, 25, 40; 14:7, 15, 21; 20:24.

¹⁶ Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 19-20.

¹⁷ Vanhoozer, *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, 38.

fulfillment and missionally unveiling the ongoing 5th act, wherein one realizes their place in the story of God.¹⁸ This story is what Jesus introduces to the world (Luke 24:44-49) and invites the follower into by purpose and design (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), challenging the disciples to live in full awareness and actualization that their lives are a continuation of what was established at creation and led to Him and His cross; this must now be the story told that offers the compelling capacity to create a new narrative for the world to live by (2 Corinthians 5:17): the means of turning a captivated world back to God through lived story.

The story/narrative re-stories¹⁹ and is characterized as good news, gospel, and a message that is both the mission of life and model of successful living. By mission, we mean the intended, ongoing act of the disciple to live and proclaim what is done through Jesus. By model, it is meant as the standard, tangible expression of good news embodied for the onlooker to witness and experience. The world witnessed the witness of the storyteller, Jesus. He was the Word made flesh. His disciples, storytelling followers, continue manifesting that word as they step into the story, live out that story, and re-story others' life interactions.

Note, as an apologetic model, the consistent practice of the first-century disciple is to step into the story with the realization of its redemptive intentions that both look backward and forward to give meaning and significance to the now. This dualism naturally occurs as the

¹⁸ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 320-323.

¹⁹ This project holds that Story is God's means to move one toward the plausibility of an accurate, authentic existence. The narrative of scripture and the good news story of Jesus are the driving stories in which disciples live both in awareness and actualized realization. The lived narrative/story becomes an acceptable avatar that guides those in the dark toward enlightenment and the ignorant to awareness. Lived Narrative Apologetics guides the disciple's actualizing of the mission of Greater Narrative in every instance of one-on-one encounters as their lives argue for the best explanation for everyday life. As an apologetic, Lived Narrative Apologetics is an ongoing moment, an argument made by the disciple on behalf of their life mandate, established by God. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that life is done successfully only under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

narrative secures the disciple's worldview and strengthens their witness. It will be argued later that the duality of "the gospel" being historical while still unfolding is matched only by its unique ability to ground and establish faith simultaneously. It grounds faith for the disciple (Romans 15:4) while creating faith for the seeker (Romans 10:17). Acts depicts the progression of the message and continuation of Jesus' method, which evangelical values would agree includes apologetics and evangelism.²⁰ Luke records, "Those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." They did so daily, from house to house, and they would not stop until the mission was realized (Acts 8:4; 2:42-47; 20:24).

*Third, The Greater Narrative is an appeal to others, an invitation to step into the scheme (renewal plan of God), or take your place in Act 5, respond to the drama unfolding before you.*²¹ Here, one should especially note the evangelistic nuance and the case-making faculty of narrative. The narrative that Jesus and His disciples lived under ultimately aimed to invite others into it. *The invitation was facilitated through the way the story formed their lives.* Jesus and the disciples lived by the wisdom of the narrative (Luke 2:40, 52; 6:31; 10:25-37). *Thus, their lives*

²⁰ This notion will be further developed later in this chapter from the work of Alister McGrath.

²¹ Vanhoozer, *Pictures at Theological Exhibition*, 218-250.

Vanhoozer holds that theology exists to make the faith comprehensible (meaningful) and apologetics to demonstrate its plausibility (truth). (Kevin J. Vanhoozer. 2006. "Theology and Apologetics." In *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, edited by Jack Campbell and Gavin J. McGrath. (Downers Grove, IL, 2006), 42.) The approach suggested here is where that agenda is brought to bear in "drama," which engages culture and allows a strategic means to express the truths of God through one's everyday living. (Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *Pictures at Theological Exhibition*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 222-226.

About "drama," Vanhoozer says, "If epic and lyric are the thesis and antithesis of my brief history of recent apologetics, it will come as no surprise that drama is the synthesis, transcending the objective/subjective dichotomy with intersubjectivity. In drama, embodied human beings are the medium of aesthetic expressions, not as solitary individuals but in interaction with others. "At its best, drama is able to embrace the objective and the subjective, to maintain a sense of plot and purpose without suppressing the individuality, diversity, and the complexity of levels, perspectives, motivations, and ideas" (223).

Therefore, one's life is an existence in which the wisdom of God is on display (221-222). Vanhoozer calls this practical display of wisdom "phronesis" (practical relationality) (227). This type of intentional living by disciples embodies our implicit understanding of why we are here and what we are to do – our grasp of the meaning of the whole (228).

become both a compelling and coherent way to live, a narrative that makes sense, and that makes sense of the world: a narrative that is therefore attractive and capable of engaging those captivated by secular narratives through a more captivating narrative lived before them (Luke 4:14-15, 16-30, 31-32). This lived narrative explains the grounding for the storyteller's (the disciple's) worldview and the subject of the story they live, Jesus (Luke 24:25-7, 44-49).

These three dimensions of The Greater Narrative facilitate how the church, disciple, and storytellers live in the story of God, under the story of God, and by the story of God as they practice “re-storying” another. Re-storying is the apologetic intention and hopeful outcome of Lived Narrative Apologetics. *For this reason, it is proposed that Lived Narrative Apologetics is apologetics reimaged.* However, the reimaging is more of a continuation of what Christ has done and desires to do in the church. Therefore, the actualizing of Lived Narrative Apologetics is for the purpose of Jesus (Acts 1:8). It is done as an extension of Christ (Acts 9) and transpires in the presence of a watching world (Luke 24:44-47).

The remainder of this chapter aims to offer a general overview of Christian apologetics, its goal, and its makeup. From this, Lived Narrative Apologetics will be considered to demonstrate how it accomplishes the same intentions and offers a more dynamic means of practicing apologetics.²² Lived Narrative Apologetics is illustrated in Luke-Acts as a first apologetic practice and the apologetic practice Jesus lived and continues to live through the

²² It could also be contended that Lived Narrative Apologetics is much like a worldview that, as is contended by most worldviews, is superior to all others and is a story that makes sense of the time, answers humanity's most significant concerns, and has the compelling and captivating capacity to re-story another.

disciples who make up the church. Therefore, Jesus practices Lived Narrative Apologetics in the church, even now.²³

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

What is apologetics? There is no “most scholarly” definition of apologetics, as the term has been defined and used in an assortment of ways by scholars and theologians throughout history. However, a common thread in many scholarly definitions of apologetics is the idea of defending the Christian faith against objections and presenting a positive case for its truth and relevance.

A diversity of approaches has been taken in defining the meaning, scope, and purpose of apologetics.²⁴ Some consistent elements are present in almost all methodologies of Christian apologetic practices. Following will be a brief survey of scholarly definitions to ascertain the elements of Christian Apologetics. From these definitions, a determination will be made on how Lived Narrative Apologetics can accomplish the task of apologetics.

Steven B. Cowen describes the nature of apologetics as being concerned with the defense of the Christian faith against charges of falsehood, inconsistency, and credulity. He says, “As it concerns the Christian faith, then, apologetics has to do with defending, or making a case for, the

²³ Later, effort will be given to develop Christ’s work in the church as an ongoing manifestation of his doing and teaching. The mysterious means of what that likeness is in totality is not the aim of this project, but the reality of the discussion is recognized and respected. See “*Hocutus Totus: The Elusive Wholeness of Christ*” (PRO ECCLESIA: Evangelical Theology 202, Vol.29 (1) 31-42. 2019.

²⁴ Kenneth D. Boa, “What Is Apologetics?,” in *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith*, ed. Ted Cabal et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), xxv.

truth of the Christian faith.”²⁵ According to Cowen, the apologetic task of case-making is dynamically realized *negative* or defensive apologetics or *positive* or offensive apologetics.²⁶

Apologetics is seen primarily as a defense. In his book, *Christian Apologetics*, Douglas Groothuis offers a definition to explain defense.

Christian apologetics is the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling, and existentially or subjectively engaging. The word *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which can be translated as “defense” or “vindication.” In the days of the New Testament “an *apologia* was a formal courtroom defense of something (2 Timothy 4:16).”²⁷ The word, in either the noun form *apologia* or the verb form *apologeomai*, appears eight times in the New Testament (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7, 16; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15). The term is used specifically for a rational defense of the gospel in three texts: Philippians 1:7, 16, and most famously in 1 Peter 3:15–16.²⁸

For Groothuis, the defense of the Christian worldview is an appeal to one’s rationale. In his definition above, the need to set Christ apart as distinct is noted. However, the ability to make a case for the Christian worldview seems to limit apologetics to a certain kind of rationality.

In his book, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, John Frame defines apologetics as “the discipline that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope, how to defend the faith against objections, and how to present the faith positively to unbelievers.”²⁹ Similarly, in his chapter of *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, William Edgar says, “Apologetics is the art

²⁵ Stanley N. Gundry and Steven B. Cowen, eds., *Five Views on Apologetics*, Zondervan Counterpoints Collection (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁷ L. G. Whitlock Jr., “Apologetics,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 68.

²⁸ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Apollos, 2011).

²⁹ John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1994.), 23.

of persuasion, the discipline which considers ways to commend and defend the living God to those without faith.”³⁰ Edgar’s definition includes the significant need for artistry, therefore, creativity, in persuasion. Apologetics, then, includes persuasion. Edgar additionally allows for a dynamic, nimble, and adaptable appreciation for apologetics being done as it commends and defends the living God to those without faith.

In *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, William Lane Craig defines apologetics as “the rational defense of the Christian faith against objections, with the goal of persuading people to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.”³¹ Craig emphasizes the importance of apologetics in engaging with the objections and challenges that arise in discussions about faith. He argues it should be grounded in a deep understanding of Christian doctrine and commitment to the truth of the gospel.³² He also emphasizes the need for apologetics to be performed in an intellectually thorough and culturally sensitive way.³³

N. T. Wright, in *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*, defines apologetics as the task of bringing the gospel to bear on the questions, doubts, and hopes of our culture to show how the gospel is not only the answer to questions people are asking, but also the answer to questions they should be asking.³⁴ Wright emphasizes the importance of apologetics in engaging

³⁰ Gavin Campbell-Jack and McGrath, Editors; C. Stephen, Evans, Consulting editor., *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 3.

³¹ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 17.

³² *Ibid.*, 17-30.

³³ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

³⁴ The message of the gospel is the good news that Jesus is the one true “emperor,” ruling the world with his own brand of self-giving love. Wright, N. T., *Simply Christian* (208). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

with the questions and concerns of those outside the church and argues that it should be grounded in a deep understanding of the biblical narrative and person of Jesus Christ.³⁵

Gary Habermas defines apologetics as the discipline of presenting arguments for the Christian faith.³⁶ Habermas emphasizes the importance of apologetics in engaging with objections and challenges that arise in discussions about faith and argues that it should be grounded in a deep understanding of evidence surrounding the gospel (particularly the minimal facts).³⁷ He also emphasizes the need for apologetics to be performed in a way that is both adaptable and culturally aware, seriously taking the questions and concerns of those with whom one is engaging.³⁸ For Habermas, apologetics is an aid for the gospel message to be preached, but God must be in the process for conversion to occur (See John 6:44; Romans 3:11).³⁹

Perhaps one of the most important texts to define apologetics is *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, in which Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr. address the difficulty in cultivating a concise definition of apologetics.⁴⁰ The authors

³⁵ Ibid., 234-237.

³⁶ Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case of The Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publication, 2004), 250.

³⁷ Ibid., 33.

³⁸ Ibid., 33-34. He used Paul as model who engaged Jewish audiences through their Old Testament history but Athenians through their poets and philosophy.

³⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁰ Kenneth Boa & Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons*. <https://books.apple.com/us/book/faith-has-its-reasons/id818873561>

The authors establish that translating the Christian worldview to a non-Christian world has been the problem of Christian spokespersons since the early days of the church. The textbook aims to bring the reader in on this conversation to contribute to understanding the different apologetic methods that will enrich all Christians in their defense of the faith and enable them to speak with more apparent and more relevant voices to our present day and beyond (16-17). For this project, this text serves as a basis to offer one of the more developed and curated understandings of apologetics and its goal with non-Christians.

offer a robust explanation for the challenge of appreciating the meaning and mission of apologetics for the church with the notion that “The New Testament, then, does not use the words *apologia* and *apologeomai* in the technical sense of the modern word apologetics.”⁴¹

Reading through multiple contributors, Boa and Bowman engage prevalent thoughts on the subject to offer a helpful conclusion on apologetics for this project. *Four functions, goals, modes, or aspects of apologetics must be distinguished when considering Christian apologetics.*

Apologetics as *proof* shows that Christianity is reasonable; its purpose is to give the non-Christian good reasons to embrace the Christian faith. Apologetics as *defense* shows that Christianity is not unreasonable; its purpose is to show that the non-Christian will not be acting irrationally by trusting in Christ or by accepting the Bible as God’s word. Third, apologetics as *refutation* shows that non-Christian thought is unreasonable. The purpose of refuting non-Christian belief systems is to confront non-Christians with the irrationality of their position. And fourth, apologetics as *persuasion* takes into consideration the fact that Christianity is not known by reason alone. The apologist seeks to persuade non-Christians to trust Christ, not merely to accept truth claims about Christ, and this purpose necessitates realizing the personal dimension in apologetic encounters and in every conversion to faith in Christ.⁴²

As will be developed below, the authors indicate that apologetics ought not to be thought of from a one-dimensional frame of reference but is dynamic and ought to be lived.⁴³ *The church*

⁴¹ Ibid., 31.

⁴² Ibid., 36-39.

⁴³ This text offers several additional works that are seminal to the abovementioned summation. Howe, Frederic R. *Challenge and Response: A Handbook for Christian Apologetics*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). The first two chapters discuss the definition of apologetics (13-24) and the relationship between evangelism and apologetics (25-33), with Howe arguing for a sharp distinction between the two.

Mayers, Ronald B. “What Is Apologetics?” Chapter 1 in *Balanced Apologetics: Using Evidences and Presuppositions in Defense of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 1-14. First published as *Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic*. (Chicago: Moody, 1984). Helpful treatment of the meaning of *apologia* and the relationship between apologetics and philosophy.

Warfield, Benjamin B. “Apologetics.” In *The New Schaff-Hertzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, 1:232-238. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908). Reprinted in *Studies in Theology*, 3-21. The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield 9. New York: Oxford University Press, 1932; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. It is still a hard-to-match analysis of the nature of apologetics and its place in the academic disciplines.

that lives within the narrative of God has the means of being the mode needed for the encounters she meets. Some occasions are proof or vindication moments, where historical evidence is prominent, and science is undeniable (Acts 2:22-24). Some functions are to make a defense when accusations are made contrary to one's conviction or belief (Acts 22:1-5; 24:10-21; 26:1-32). Still, the goal may be to refute opposing beliefs (Acts 6:8-7:1-60; 17:22-31). Nevertheless, in every case, the persuasion mission is always the other side of the apologetic coin (Acts 2:17-42; 13:15-52).

Additionally, and considering this project, Christian apologetics must be curated from the vantage point of the first practitioners. To do this, we must consider the "acts of apologetics" in the early church. Understanding the modes of apologetics from the early church's history, apostles, and disciples offer the means to make practical application for the church today. Alister McGrath offers insight into Christian Apologetics, which answers the question from the history of the church in Acts.⁴⁴

In a series of articles, McGrath articulates the importance and practice of apologetics seen by the Apostles.⁴⁵ This contribution offers clarity and helps contextualize the meaning derived

⁴⁴ In his book *Mere Apologetics*, Alister McGrath defines apologetics as "the discipline that seeks to provide a rational defense of the Christian faith against its critics and to offer a positive presentation of the faith to those who are interested in it." McGrath also emphasizes the importance of apologetics in engaging with contemporary culture and addressing the challenges and objections that arise in discussions about faith. He argues that apologetics should be grounded in a deep understanding of Christian theology and history and a sensitivity to the needs and perspectives of those with whom one engages.

This definition can be found in his book "Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith" (2012), where he explores the nature and purpose of apologetics and various approaches to it.

⁴⁵ Alister McGrath developed a four-part series, "Biblical Models for Apologetics," delivered as the W. H. Griffith Thomas Lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary, February 4-7, 1997.

McGrath, Alister E. "Evangelical Apologetics." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1998, Vol. 155 (617), pp: 3-10. ISSN: 0006-1921. The early apologetic approaches of the Gospels and Acts offer insights into authentically biblical methods of apologetics, as well as strategies for interacting with specific groups that were significant to the

from the church as seen in Acts. In “Evangelical Apologetics,” McGrath says, “Apologetics is setting out the full wonder of the gospel of salvation. It is like unpacking a series of wonderful gifts and marveling at their beauty. Helping people understand the full glory of what the gospel offers often means explaining central Christian ideas to people who may recognize the words but not the reality they represent.”⁴⁶ McGrath emphasizes that the more aware the church is of her meaning, the more poignant her apologetic will be. The ability to “know the story you are in and tell that story” offers the means of practicing the negative (being able to handle objections to

development of the early church. The same issues remain as relevant today as they were at the dawn of the Christian era. In this entry, McGrath grounds the practice of apologetics in the value of bibliocentrism shared in evangelical thought.

McGrath, Alister E. “Apologetics to the Greeks.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1998, Vol. 155 (619), pp: 259–265. ISSN: 0006–1921. Paul’s Areopagus sermon illustrates the NT tendency to mingle *kerygma* (preaching) and *apologia* (apologetics) as two aspects of a greater whole or two sides of the same coin, as argued earlier in this project. Unfortunately, the proclamation of the gospel and its reasoned defense are often separated. Kerygmatic theology is detached from apologetics for methodological reasons, yet both are essential components in proclaiming Christ in the NT. The NT brings the two together in a creative and productive interplay; to proclaim the gospel is thus to defend the gospel, just as defending the gospel is proclaiming the gospel.

McGrath, Alister E. “Apologetics to the Jews.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1998, Vol. 155 (618), pp: 131–138. ISSN: 0006–1921. On the grounds that his Jewish audience regarded as compelling, Peter insisted that Jesus was the Messiah. This continues to have apologetic significance today. While believers should be concerned with how they defend and articulate the gospel in modern or postmodern Western culture, they ought not to lose sight of the fact that it has relevance beyond this and that non-Western audiences may use different criteria in evaluating its truth and relevance. Here, McGrath contends for the historicity of the cross and its importance to today’s audience.

McGrath, Alister E. “Apologetics to the Romans.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1998, Vol. 155 (620), pp: 387–393. ISSN: 0006–1921. Paul followed three principles in defending the gospel before Roman hearers: (1) In Acts 24 and 26, he addressed the Roman authorities of Caesarea, tailoring his approach to his particular audience. (2) He appealed to Greek poets and Roman criteria of evidence. (3) He was careful to conform to Roman legal practice, thus seeking to ensure that the gospel was presented most effectively. Note the summation from William Sailer et al., *Religious and Theological Abstracts* (Myerstown, PA: Religious and Theological Abstracts, 2012). Only minor additions have been made to establish these journals’ immediate connection to this project.

⁴⁶ *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998). V 155, N 617, p 4 This is article one in a four-part series “Biblical Models for Apologetics,” delivered by the author as the W. H. Griffith Thomas Lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary, February 4–7, 1997.

Christianity)⁴⁷ and positive apologetics in a manner that ensures ownership of one's place in the story of God.⁴⁸

Another unique attribute of apologetics articulated by McGrath is the duality of apologetics with evangelism. The defense of Christianity as objectively true, rationally compelling, and subjectively engaging also plays a leading role in evangelism, but how? McGrath argues that apologetics and evangelism are two sides of the same coin. He writes, "Apologetics stresses the reasonableness and attractiveness of the Christian faith; evangelism makes the offer of that faith."⁴⁹ Note, from this conceptualization of apologetics, the nature of how the church must be "ready to make a defense" (1 Peter 3:15) takes up a unique enterprise. McGrath further explains the duality.

As a kind of pre-evangelism, apologetics prepares the way for an invitation to be issued, by helping people understand what Christianity is about and why it is so attractive and meaningful. Then the way is clear for the next stage: presenting an invitation or challenge. The banquet analogy brings out a basic but often overlooked distinction between apologetics and evangelism. Apologetics is nonconfrontational; it is not threatening. But

⁴⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁸ Here, this project adds to the application made by McGrath. His primary meaning is that good apologetics comes from being able to tell or communicate the themes of the Gospel and Christianity to the ordinary person. He quotes C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 96. "We must learn the language of our audience. And let me say at the outset that it is no use laying down *a priori* what the "plain man" does or does not understand. You have to find out by experience.... You must translate every bit of your theology into the vernacular. This is very troublesome ... but it is essential. It is also of the greatest service to your own thought. I have come to the conclusion that if you cannot translate your own thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts are confused. Power to translate is the test of having really understood your own meaning."

The point McGrath is making is to emphasize the bridge toward understanding Christian claims through one's ability to know the meanings of the themes in a fundamental yet thorough way. This project agrees with this notion but would add that there is a more significant way to communicate difficult themes than just knowing them well enough to talk about them. This project contends that when the gospel themes are lived, the church demonstrates its most persuasive means of communicating difficult themes such as unconditional love, forgiveness, and the saving power of grace. This lived communication of difficult themes is especially seen in the narrative of Saul of Tarsus and his conversion, which will be considered later in this chapter.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

evangelism is confrontational, for it asks individuals to consider whether they are ready to take the step of faith—a step for which apologetics has prepared the way.⁵⁰

With the above work and especially McGrath’s explanation and analogy in mind, several points will be issued as the goal of apologetics. *First*, apologetics aims to remove obstacles in the way of seeing the narrative, The Good News of God for man. Apologetics is nonconfrontational in that it is a servant functioning to clear up the blinding matters of ignorance, misconception, and even demonic engagement (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). *Second*, apologetics is not a matter of creating faith; instead, it aims to establish an optimal environment for faith to thrive.

“Apologetics may not create belief, but it creates the atmosphere in which belief can come to life.”⁵¹ Benjamin B. Warfield noted, “The action of the Holy Spirit in giving faith is not apart from evidence, but along with evidence; and in the first instance consists in preparing the soul for the reception of evidence.”⁵² Apologetics does not intend to convert souls or create faith.

Apologetic practitioners are ever mindful of the work of The Holy Spirit to create faith. *Third*, apologetics is a defense made to vindicate God’s story in response to accusations that may misrepresent the narrative.

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4-10.

⁵¹ Edgar C. Powell, *On Giants’ Shoulders: Studies in Christian Apologetics* (Epsom, UK: Day One Publications, 1999), 23.

⁵² B. B. Warfield (1932) *Studies in Theology* (Oxford University, N.Y.), 15.

⁵³ New American Standard Bible, 1 Peter 3:15–16.

Apologetics is a defense that expresses discipline for the church. The church functions from a disposition of exclusivity (sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts), meaning there is no space in the narrative they live, which presents a story other than the fact that she is The Bride of Christ. The church is, therefore, the representation of Christ: His body undeniably present in the now. The readiness is a byproduct of her authenticity. When the disciples of the church function from awareness of the story, it shapes their lives, and character, behavior, and mentality are all at work to account for convictions.⁵⁴

Fourth, apologetics is pre-evangelism work. As mentioned earlier, apologetics prepares the way for an invitation to be issued. This indicates that good apologetics includes an evangelistic tone. A Lived Narrative Apology allows one to see the plausibility of trying on the story for themselves. The attraction to abundant living is a first step that God implements for salvation. All that are drawn are drawn by the exalted Christ, who is actualized in the life of the church (John. 12:32; Acts 8-9). *Fifth*, apologetics is most effective when the storytellers know the story intimately, and that transfers incarnationally.⁵⁵ When the “reasons” for hope are questioned and under accusation, the reason for hope must be apparent to the storyteller. The church and all disciples represent dynamic, ongoing letters of God that manifest His grace and communicate supremacy of the narrative of God to the world with a lesser story (2 Corinthians 2:14; 3:2). *Sixth*, apologetics should be directly related to themes that are important to and comprehensible by the audience one engages.⁵⁶ The early church demonstrated multifaceted

⁵⁴ This concept will especially be seen when Paul meets Christ in “the way people” and that impact is realized more fully when he meets Christ in the way.

⁵⁵ McGrath, Alister E. “Apologetics to the Jews.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1998, Vol. 155 (618), pp: 131–138. ISSN: 0006–1921. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

means of communicating their lived story to various contexts (Acts 2:14-47; Acts 14; Acts 16; Acts 17; Acts 24-26). *Seventh*, apologetics is dynamic and a living expression of Christ through the church, which intrudes into another's world, like light, but offers direction for life and clarity for the best existence one could live (John 1:12; 10:10; Luke 24:44-49).

Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that these seven values of apologetics are evident in the life of Christ, the early church, the disciples, and this proposed model. Following will be an explanation of Lived Narrative Apologetics, which defines and demonstrates apologetics as a way of life and examines it as an apologetic enterprise.

LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS AS THE WAY OF LIFE AND LIFE IN CHRIST

Luke, in Acts, records the church living the wisdom of God in what is described as irresistible (Acts 6:10). The Greater Narrative of God shaped Jesus' life, in both His growing awareness of narrative (Luke 2:4, 52) and His actualizing of the story through His life (Luke 4:16-21). He is the first portrait of the wisdom of God lived before humanity.⁵⁷ He demonstrates that wisdom for humanity by increasing in the story.⁵⁸ His scripturally influenced life was the Word made flesh (John 1:14) and glory beheld, which invited the watching world to try on a better story and become like Him (John 1:12).

As Jesus' life was people-forming, Lived Narrative Apologetics offers a people-forming act that synthesizes discipleship and Christian apologetics in a relationally dynamic, adaptively

⁵⁷ See 1 Cor. 1:24.

⁵⁸ See Luke 2:40, 52.

hospitable context. This deepens the discipleship process, while shaping the epistemology of those it engages, allowing the Christian worldview to be a living, breathing apology, which reads the culture (its inconsistencies and similarities, strengths and weaknesses) and is read by the culture (through intimate engagements, questions and validation of a value's grounding).

Furthermore, Lived Narrative Apologetics is the awareness and actualization that one is called into the narrative of God and lives out their place in His story in the church through the dynamic interplay of one's personal story and the renewal narrative of God, which has imaginative capacity to re-story another. Kevin J. Vanhoozer's work is seminal in this project's aim, especially as the church and Jesus are placed in tension to describe "The Way" (Acts 9:2). From this discussion, more clarity will be offered to distinguish Vanhoozer's premise of practical display of wisdom contrasted with lived narrative.

Vanhoozer's model of sapiential apologetics suggests a paradigm to see the intercourse of theology, evangelism, and apologetics.⁵⁹ Concerning Sapiential Apologetics, Vanhoozer writes, "Every Christian represents a crucial premise, and taken together, these premises compromise the socially embodied argument which is the body of Christ."⁶⁰ Lived Narrative Apologetics accepts Vanhoozer's base and adds that as the church, Christ does apologetics through the disciples (Acts 9:1-2, 4-5, 6). The Holy Spirit gives power for life change, and the narrative of

⁵⁹ See the earlier discussion of Sapiential Apologetics in chapter one.

⁶⁰ Vanhoozer, *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, 42.

Seeing the significance of sapiential apologetics helps shape one's understanding of the application power of Lived Narrative Apologetics and its practical implementation. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that it is the first model that grounds all apologetic models. It contends that Jesus is an archetype who supplies the seedbed of all other practical insights on apologetics. Therefore, His *doing* and *teaching*, being realized in Lived Narrative Apologetics, is foundational for all practical models of Christian apologetics. This argument will be further developed in the final part of this project.

God is continued, offering renewal to each person that God's lived wisdom encounters (Acts 1:8; 2:38; 5:32).

The significance of Vanhoozer's "Sapiential Apologetics" helps shape the understanding of Lived Narrative Apologetics and its practical implementation. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that it is a first model that grounds all apologetic models. It contends that Jesus is a standard who funds the seedbed of all other practical insights on apologetics. Therefore, His *doing* and *teaching*, being realized in Lived Narrative Apologetics, is foundational for all practical models of Christian apologetics. Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that Christ does apologetics through the church as each disciple actualizes their place in God's renewal project. The awareness of the story is a spiritual bridge that Jesus crosses to make His hope known in the church (Colossian 1:27). This argument will be further developed in the final part of this project. Here, note N.T. Wright's explanation of the Scripture's authoritative means of empowering the church as an apologetic.

In addition to Jesus depicting wisdom, N. T. Wright, in *How Can The Bible Be Authoritative*, argues the authority of Scripture as narrative and worldview can tell a better story to a watching world while inviting them into God's re-narratizing narrative.⁶¹ Wright says, "The biblical story, has a shape and a goal that must be *observed* and to which appropriate response must be made."⁶² The church demonstrates the narrative of God as they live His story while in the act (the 5th act) they are called into, and with full awareness. Additionally, Lived Narrative

⁶¹ *How can the Bible Be Authoritative?*; Vox Evangelica (1991, 21, 7-32)
<https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/how-can-the-bible-be-authoritative/>

⁶² *Ibid.*, 15.

Apologetics contends that the appropriate response for the reader (a watching world) is to step into the better story of God, which makes sense of life while offering a better life.⁶³

This demonstration of the lived narrative is captured in Acts. About this realized narrative, Wright says,

The whole book of Acts is really about what it looks like when the life of heaven comes to birth on earth...The mission of the church, the fact of the church is grounded in the belief that heaven and earth have come together in several senses, one of which is the church. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt.6:3-9). And, again, the keys were given and whatever was loosed on earth was already done in heaven etc.... Matt.16:19.⁶⁴

The Book of Acts represents the expectation of God being realized in the ascent of Jesus, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the consent of the unfolding mission of heaven, beginning at Jerusalem and continuing throughout the world.⁶⁵ It is rightly named “Acts,” as it marks the beginning of action and indicates a continuation, without cessation, through the Jesus people. These followers live the narrative, the ancient narrative.⁶⁶ The Book of Acts captures the church in fulfillment of The Fifth Act of Wright’s taxonomy, demonstrating the genesis of The New Testament people.⁶⁷ The church is recorded as living under the authority of the extant story, offering lived improvisations, story, score, and actual performance of the final act.⁶⁸ The disciples are the intent of God’s written word and its design functioning through humans,

⁶³ See John 1:12; John 10:10; Acts 2:41; Acts 3:19.

⁶⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHtJ94951Jg>

⁶⁵ See Acts 1-2.

⁶⁶ *How can the Bible Be Authoritative?*; Vox Evangelica (1991, 21, 7-32.) Pg. 10; <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/how-can-the-bible-be-authoritative/>

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 16.

through the church.⁶⁹ Wright contends that the ancient narrative (The Story of God; The Greater Narrative) is designed to function through people living by the Spirit; their lives have been molded by this spirit-inspired book. The disciples live in the power, strength, and leading of the Spirit, so they may then speak freshly and with authority to the world for this same Creator (God) by immersing themselves in Scripture (the story of God), all for the mission of the story.⁷⁰

Jesus established this model of Scripturally saturated living that authoritatively tells the story of heaven.⁷¹ “Story authority, as Jesus knew only too well, is authority that really works.”⁷² The lived narrative becomes God’s apologetic expression, inviting another into a different world. One is invited to share a worldview or, better still, a “God View.”⁷³ *The dynamic embodied actualizing of the narrative of God demonstrates a worldview that quietly shatters previous worldviews.*⁷⁴

Additionally, stories determine how people see the world, themselves, others, and the events within that reality.⁷⁵ *Lived Narrative Apologetics has the capacity to capture and conform fundamental and consequent beliefs.* By basic beliefs, we mean those beliefs held at a more conscious level than the worldview itself, one’s automatic means of interpreting life’s happenings. By consequent beliefs, we mean those beliefs that affect how one approaches the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 19-20.

⁷¹ See Luke 2:40; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-14; Luke 24:44-49.

⁷² Ibid., 11.

⁷³ Ibid., 10-35.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10-35.

⁷⁵ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 135.

concept of God, Scripture, and the implications of those beliefs if they are true.⁷⁶ Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that Jesus demonstrates living in a narrative that tells the story of God in a manner that challenges and changes basic and consequent beliefs through captivating the imagination to see life through the lenses of a better story, a renewed look at life.⁷⁷

Lived Narrative Apologetics challenges beliefs, which affect behavior, through the basis of story, living the story. N. T. Wright suggests that a story-based worldview has the capacity to shape one's beliefs and, subsequently, one's behavior, which are vital elements of a plausibility structure. Lived Narrative Apologetics establishes a means to recover the plausibility, virtuousness, and attractiveness of the biblical account of what God is doing through Jesus Christ to make things right: His renewal program for humanity.⁷⁸

By plausibility structure, we mean what Peter Berger indicates in a discussion on what is humanly necessary for someone to change their basic perception of the world and, with it, identify an allegiance, as in religious conversion:

The most important social condition is the availability of an effective plausibility structure, that is, a social base serving as the “laboratory” of transformation. This plausibility structure will be mediated to the individual by means of significant others, with whom he must establish strongly affective identification. No radical transformation of subjective reality (including, of course, identity) is possible without such identification, which inevitably replicates childhood experiences of emotional dependency on significant others. These significant others are the guides into the new reality.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid., 131-135.

⁷⁷ See John 1:12; 10:10; Acts 3:20; 17:30-31; 14:15; 13:32-39.

⁷⁸ Chatraw, *Telling a Better Story*, i.

⁷⁹ R. W. L. Moberly, “Theological Interpretation, Presuppositions, and the Role of the Church: Bultmann and Augustine Revisited,” ed. Joel B. Green, *Journal of Theological Interpretation, Volume 6*, no. 1–2 (2012): 18.

To illustrate the above notion of a viable plausibility structure through Lived Narrative Apologetics, we will now consider the narrative of Paul in Acts. Paul was invited into the narrative and lived that narrative in a complete belief and behavior-orienting manner.⁸⁰ His conversion and shift in belief came through an effectively constructed social condition/social base by the conditioning of Stephen, those of “The Way,” and Jesus. In these spaces, Paul encountered the narrative of God that pointed to Jesus and subsequently invited Paul to live as though it was true. Luke records that Paul was re-storied and would be a part of encountering others with the narrative of God. Though the place of the church would be essential for the overall ministry and mission of Paul and his continuance, Acts illustrates that he was re-storied by Jesus, with Ananias being used to initiate that encounter.⁸¹ There is no way of ascertaining the

⁸⁰ See P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Reality of Religion*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974, pp. 54ff: ‘The reality of the Christian world depends upon the presence of social structures (emphasis mine) within which this reality is taken for granted ... when this plausibility structure loses its intactness or continuity, the Christian world begins to totter ...’ (55). *Evangelical review of theology* 18 (1994).

This note is a part of Newbiggin’s discussion on how Berger defines Plausibility structures. He is favorable to Berger’s use, especially as it connects the place of the church. Here, it is argued that that place is a subsequent application for plausibility and not primary if one holds to the church being Christ incarnate, as is argued in this project, though not exclusively.

“Newbiggin clearly means by this the framework of ideas, the interpretive key, bequeathed to the church by the biblical story, which offers an alternative worldview to that prevailing in modern society. But for Berger, the concept is rather the reverse: the ‘plausibility structure’ is not the beliefs but the edifice of social institutions that lend credibility to the beliefs.⁴ Thus, it is the church that is the plausibility structure for the Christian worldview, rather than the worldview that is the alternative plausibility structure borne by the church. One effect of secularization is that the church itself is left as the only structure functioning to support the credibility of Christian belief, whereas, in earlier times, a whole network of social institutions shared in the job.” *Evangelical review of theology* 18 (1994): 373.

⁸¹ According to Berger, “Conversion may antedate affiliation with the community—Saul of Tarsus sought out the Christian community *after* his ‘Damascus experience.’ But this is not the point. To have a conversion experience is nothing much. The real thing is to be able to keep on taking it seriously, to retain a sense of its plausibility. *This* is where the religious community comes in. It provides the indispensable plausibility structure for the new reality. In other words, Saul may have become Paul in the aloneness of religious ecstasy, but he could *remain* Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognized him as such and confirmed the “new being” in which he now located this identity.” The church as an apologetic; this concept is very close to the overall argument of this project. The exception to the argument is that Lived Narrative Apologetics maintains that the individual disciple is also the ongoing apologetic work of Jesus, and the disciples make up the church; therefore, the

impact the church had in shaping Paul's thinking prior to his conversion, but there was some impact that is evident (Acts 22:19-20; 24:24). See the note concerning Berger for more discussion on the antecedent impact of the church on Saul/Paul.

Lived Narrative Apologetics contains the power to capture the imagination and facilitate a space for conversion, as evidenced by Saul/Paul's consequent change in belief and behavior. Luke illustrates the progression of Saul being invited into the narrative with some (possible questions) about that uncompromised living in the narrative. Later, it will be argued that there is a traceable taxonomy when Lived Narrative Apologetics is used by Jesus and later by Paul. Here, Luke offers an example of Saul/Paul's encounter with the author of the narrative, Jesus. Following that encounter, Paul's beliefs and behavior corresponded to the narrative to the degree that his conviction shaped how he lived and navigated life, hence, the wisdom of his ways.

With explanation, what will be offered now are examples of Paul being invited into the narrative to illustrate its capacity to shift beliefs and behaviors as it did with Saul/Paul. Notice the capacity of lived narrative to apologetically engage and create space through the church by Jesus for the imagination to be captivated and, subsequently, one's worldview to be exchanged.

1. Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

church of Christ is Christ making a case as Christ. Additionally, the church is joining God, who is at work through the church, to affect heart change in the lives of those who would be saved.

For example, Dennis Hollinger, "The Church as Apologetic: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective," in *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (ed. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Ockholm; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 182–93. *Journal of Theological Interpretation, Volume 6*, no. 1–2 (2012).

Ibid., 158. Some of the rhetoric, both about a conversion experience as "nothing much" and about Paul's conversion as illustrative of "the aloneness of religious ecstasy," is conceptually problematic and potentially misleading. However, the substantive point about the retentive significance of a plausibility structure remains valid. (*Journal of Theological Interpretation, Volume 6*, no. 1–2 (2012)).

And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” (Acts 9:1–6, NASB95).

This text illustrates Saul’s beliefs and behavior being shaped at the conversion point. Having been confronted by those who belong to the way, Saul is additionally confronted by the author of “The Way,” Jesus. This confrontation is coupled with an invitation to a new way of living. Jeremiah J. Johnston, in *Body of Proof*, illustrates Saul’s mentality in this encounter with Christ through the church, which demonstrates Saul’s vehement nature toward Christ and the church.

Saul of Tarsus (later known as Paul) was a pious Jew who believed in the general eschatological resurrection... He was a Pharisee. He believed in Israel’s legacy. He believed the people of God were in fact chosen. He believed in a future vindication someday. And Saul of Tarsus was outraged over Christianity... he was outraged because they were teaching about the resurrection and Jesus in an open form of evangelization. They now believed in an open community where gentiles were welcome. And it was not required that gentiles convert in the usual pharisaic understanding... And Saul saw this as a threat... Indeed, he interpreted this as an existential threat to the future of Israel.⁸²

Johnston rightly indicates that this way of life was an existential threat to the Jewish worldview Saul lived. Johnston goes on to note that the belief Saul held was staunch. “Saul is appalled by what he sees in Christianity. He sees Christianity, therefore, as a threat, a corruption, a heresy...”⁸³ Yet, in Acts, Luke captures an encounter that brings Saul’s reasoning to a halt, as the very thing he has passionately worked to deny is undeniably evidenced as truth. This truth, as argued by the resurrected Lord, humbles Saul. The confronted now questions, saying, “Who are

⁸² Johnston, Jeremiah J.. *Body of Proof* (Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition), 110-111.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 111.

you, Lord?” According to Peter, this is the apologetic pivot that the disciple’s life lives to answer (1 Peter 3:15).

Saul’s conversion story also includes the encounter with Ananias, who explains what he “must do.” Note, here it could be argued, especially considering the subsequent conversion stories of Paul (Acts 22:1-21; 26:12-23), that Ananias may have explained more of the mission, along with the meaning of the narrative on display before his, through Jesus. Also, Saul was with the disciples for some days (Acts 9:19). What was he doing with the disciples? Likely, he was learning more about the story lived before him that he is now actively a part of (the early creed and kerygma of 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 1:13-17, 18-20, 21-24; 2:1-2).⁸⁴ In this way, Saul becomes and is made into a storyteller (Mathew 28:18-20; Acts 2:42).⁸⁵

Saul proclaims, soon after, this new assimilation into the community of believers that he previously persecuted (Acts 9:20-21, 22, 28-29). His message was the very antithesis of his actions just before (Galatians 2:11-21; 3:27-29). Luke writes, “...and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’” (Acts 9:20, NASB95). This would otherwise be blasphemy if the man did not own the conviction. The enemy is now a champion. Saul’s progression of heralding and announcing the truth of a system and its leader that Saul previously worked to destroy is drastic, but it proves that his beliefs and behavior have

⁸⁴ J. E. Colwell, “Kerygma, Kerygmatic Theology,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, 364. The Greek word kērygma is usually translated as “proclamation,” “preaching,” or “announcement,” and outside of the New Testament, it was used generally for a public notice proclaimed by a herald whereby that which was announced became effective by the act of announcing it.

⁸⁵ See earlier point from N.T. Wright.

changed. Saul accepted being a chosen instrument in the narrative being written. (Acts 9:15-19; 26).⁸⁶

2. But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.” And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. (Acts 18:6–11, NASB95)

This text exemplifies Saul living in the narrative in the face of conflict. While ministering to the Corinthians, Jesus appears and gives him the continual promise of protection. The narrative develops, offering Saul a promise that shapes his beliefs and behavior. He lived as though the promise was trustworthy.⁸⁷ He continued serving despite a unified attack. He witnessed the attacker being seized and beaten. He continued as was directed and taught.

3. But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.” (Acts 23:11, NASB95)

⁸⁶ Johnston, *Body of Proof*, 112. Johnston describes the radical shift in Saul’s worldview to embody the tenets of Jesus entirely. He became a threat to the Jewish and Roman world in entering the story of God. “Then he dramatically meets the risen Jesus on the road, and that changes everything. But he doesn’t just say, oh, now I believe Jesus is resurrected. Now I believe he’s the Messiah. This conversion means an embracing of Jesus’ whole agenda. That he goes from a narrow-minded chauvinistic misanthropist to a man called Paul who loves all of humanity. The vision of Jesus so changes him that he writes these words in Galatians 3:28: ‘With Christ . . . there is neither Jew nor Greek’” (NIV).

⁸⁷ “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told” (Acts 27:25, NASB95). Paul’s manner of dealing with life circumstances was as though what was told to him was so. His belief affected his imperturbable manner.

This final example is perhaps the most robust illustration in Luke's recording of Saul/Paul's belief and behavior being shaped by the narrative he lived.⁸⁸ Paul lived the narrative as an answer to the conditions of life. In the text, there is a progression, maturation of faith, and development in the lived narrative.⁸⁹ As a result, Paul depends on his understanding of the story (Ephesians 3:1-4). It is without question that the earlier encounters of Saul shaped the wisdom and current poise of Paul, even in the progression of missionary journeys recorded by Luke (Philippians 4:10-13).

Paul has witnessed the truthfulness of the promise of Jesus being told to him as protection, especially as he is living out the mission assigned to him.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, Paul, in the tension of this narrative, lives with complete confidence that his story includes him testifying in Rome; therefore, nothing can happen to him until he reaches Rome. His belief shaped his behavior to the degree that he lived in the reality shaping defense of the story, prophetically unfolding before him in real-time. His life was a living epistle impacting the context around him.

⁸⁸ Luke offers several other passages that capture Paul's belief and behavior married in an awareness that actualized undaunted forward movement. This same sort of unbothered faith focus was like the Christ that called him into the narrative. The imagery of reality shaped by the narrative is especially seen in the passages discussed above. See also Acts 20:22-24; Acts 21:10-14. Acts 28:23-31

⁸⁹ Ibid., 109. Johnston contends that Paul actively investigated the narrative in both a liturgical sense (personal devotion to God) and a historical understanding of the narrative. He writes, "According to Galatians 1:18-19, Paul visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion on the road to Damascus. What was Paul doing for those three years? In verse 17 of Galatians 1, he says he went first to Arabia to spend time with God, probably in prayer, study, and meditation. He decided to go to God first rather than "consult any human being" (verse 16 NIV), even the other apostles. Then after three years, he traveled to Jerusalem sometime in the mid AD 30s to "visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days" (verse 18 NIV). The Greek word for "visit" is *historeo*, which is like our English word history. It's used outside the Bible to describe people who investigate. Our English translation "to become acquainted" (NASB) or "to visit" (ESV) with Peter doesn't do justice to the force of the Greek. Paul was carefully studying and critically thinking about Jesus' resurrection with two of the most important early eyewitnesses: Peter and James (Jesus' brother), both of whom he met in Jerusalem. Historically speaking, Paul was in the right place at the right time. This is where he received the *kerygma*."

⁹⁰ Acts 18:11; Acts 20:24; Acts 9:15; Acts 26:16-18; 28:4-6, Perhaps these examples additionally serve as a fuller meaning of "I am with you always" (Mathew 28:20).

In addition to being invited into the narrative and taking his place in the continuation of the story of God in Act 5 (see Wright earlier), Luke records Paul's story being further developed while he is on the way. Agabus, a prophet, reinforces the mission to testify for Jesus, including the reality of difficulty (Acts 21:10-14). Luke records that Paul's journey is an iconic occasion of threats, floggings, and betrayal, human hurt at its best, yet victorious.⁹¹ Still, in this progression, Luke's narrative drumbeat resonates as Jesus' words shape Paul's ways: "as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."⁹² Again, Paul is living a story, in a greater story that will re-story others. His life is pointing backward and forward while unfolding before a watching world.

Because he was scripted to testify in Rome by the author of the story, Paul's conviction is that the plot would be ineffective. He knew the imprisonments and hearings before Felix, Ananias, Tertulius, Festus, and Agrippa were necessary occasions for the mission and message his life proclaimed. The reality Paul lived in was shaped by this truth beyond hardship, prison, and conspiracies, but also the elements. In the latter chapter of Acts, Paul communicates this conviction as an expression of deep confidence in the most chaotic of moments, a shipwreck (Acts 27:24, 25, 34).⁹³

Paul represents the aim of Lived Narrative Apologetics. When the story is lived, it establishes the means for another to embrace a worldview that sees life through the narrative and

⁹¹ Paul's theology is undoubtedly conceivable when the mirror of his life's story is held before him. He speaks to the church from a well of lived truth. These truths are testimonies shared with those he disciples, like Timothy and Silas, and shared hurt that congregations experienced with him if one agrees that his letters are born out of the historical account of Acts. See 2 Tim. 3:10; Phil. 4:4-19; 2 Corinthians 4, 10-12.

⁹² Acts 23:11.

⁹³ An interesting correlation is the conviction that Stephen held while being stoned by Saul, who is suffering through all sorts of trials for the one he previously denied. He is willing to die for one he passionately wants to kill.

confidently deals with life's happenings from the vantage point of a world made sense of by God. About this vantage point, Paul would say, "I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told."⁹⁴

His behavior was characteristic of the conviction of the narrative he believed. It shaped his paradigm, peace, contentment, and how he processed and interpreted the events around him. His worldview was framed by the conviction he had to make it to Rome. Therefore, whatever was going on could not successfully stop that arrival; it could not be true to challenge or abort the narrative he believed. Everything was shaped and lived out according to the narrative he believed. His behavior followed that belief.

The grounding of this behavior-changing belief is Jesus. The apologetic thrust of Lived Narrative Apologetics is centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁹⁵ Michael Licona, in *The Resurrection of Jesus*, argues that the frequency in which similar content appears indicates that Jesus' death and resurrection were part of the apostolic preaching.⁹⁶ Lived Narrative Apologetics is depicted both in proclamation and performance by the early disciples. The most prominent proclamation and performance was life centered on Jesus' death and resurrection.⁹⁷ The genesis of apologetics attests to this claim as well as the first exemplar of Lived Narrative Apologetics, Jesus. The way of Lived Narrative Apologetics is the way of Jesus, and Jesus is seen in the ways of "The Way." It is toward this model that this project now turns.

⁹⁴ Acts 27:25 NASB95.

⁹⁵ Acts 1:22; 2:24, 31, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40, 41; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17: 3, 18, 31, 32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21; 26:8, 23.

⁹⁶ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity press, 2010), 223.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 222. Licona adds that many regard this formula as the earliest nucleus of the traditions of Jesus' resurrection, since it predates all the New Testament literature.

LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS AS AN APOLOGETIC ENTERPRISE

Lived Narrative Apologetics is a storying worldview.⁹⁸ The book of Acts chronicles a church filled with disciples who lived under the story of a Creator and His creation, ultimately acting to unfold His narrative and renew a fallen world.⁹⁹ Wright says, “The story continues with The Creator acting by His own spirit within the world to bring it towards the restoration which is his intended goal for it.”¹⁰⁰ This is the very place of Jesus’ beginning actions (doing) and teachings, transitioning from His place in the world to the continued progress of his church.¹⁰¹ Luke records the reality of Jesus, explaining that the Scripture, The Greater Narrative, points to this point of the story, and He was both aware of and living out the narrative. Additionally, he invites His disciples into His acts of “doing and teaching” with the promise of the Holy Spirit, whose work to re-narratize dynamically inaugurates the final act of Jesus on the earth through the church.¹⁰²

Confronted by ‘The Way’

Here, it should be noted that the interconnectedness of the narrative lived through the church is the narrative being continued by Jesus, who is working in the church, as the church. The church is Christ, and Christ is the church.¹⁰³ Perhaps the most profound synthesis of this

⁹⁸ Ibid., 132.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 132.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 132.

¹⁰¹ See Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8.

¹⁰² See Acts 9:1-15.

¹⁰³ *Hocutus Totus: The Elusive Wholeness of Christ* (PRO ECCLESIA: Evangelical Theology 202, Vol.29 (1) 31-42. 2019.

notion is the characterizing marker of the disciples and the church being depicted as “the way.”¹⁰⁴ *The manner the disciples lived was so distinct and “other” that it took on a designation that Luke records as “the way.”*¹⁰⁵ *The way was Christ; the way was a standard; and the way was a distinct attribute of living for Jesus' followers.*¹⁰⁶

Like Christ, the way was confrontational. The confrontation of The Way was two-sided, meaning that the people of The Way were being openly persecuted because they “belonged to the Way.” Nonetheless, the same individuals were proclaiming their faith while being persecuted.¹⁰⁷ Even in their persecution, those of The Way did not relinquish their conviction. Their conviction demonstrates they were fully oriented to this Way, the message of The Way, the martyrdom of The Way, and the meaningfulness of The Way; they believed the narrative framed life. The most prominent factor of the early apostolic message was the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:22; 2:24, 31, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40, 41; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17: 3, 18, 31, 32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21; 26:8, 23).

Luke seems to connect the realization that the way the church lived correlated to proof that they had witnessed and, therefore, were willing to be a witness.¹⁰⁸ Those of The Way had seen the “convincing proofs” (Acts 1:1-4) and concluded there was nothing they needed to fear

¹⁰⁴ See Acts 9:1-2.

¹⁰⁵ See Acts 9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 24:14, 22; Christian Acts 11:26; 26:28; The Sect of the Nazarene Acts 24:5; A sect Acts 28:22; 24:14; 24:5.

¹⁰⁶ See John 14:6.

¹⁰⁷ See Acts 8:1-4.

¹⁰⁸ See Acts 1:1-4.

(Acts 4:13-20).¹⁰⁹ From their conviction, whatever occurred in life, persecution, or unforeseen horizons, they believed they would be victorious.

This radical conviction may have been the first light that caught the attention of Saul (Acts 6:10; 7:59-60; 8:2). The wisdom of God reflected in Stephen and the love of God expressed as he was being murdered was like that of Jesus (John 1:9). He may have been fascinated by this peoples' conviction while yet infuriated at what he believed was blasphemous (Acts 22:3-5; 26:9-11). Consequently, he was in complete agreement to killing those who professed to be a part of The Way (Acts 8:1-3; Acts 26:9).¹¹⁰ The gospels reflect that the fight between worldviews, Saul and the church, is similar to Christ and the Jewish religious system, especially the hatred that moved the Jewish system to kill Jesus (Mark 3:6; Mathew 12:14; 26:4; 27:1, 20; Luke 19:47; 22:2; John 11:53).

Another picture of the mysterious union of Jesus with those of "The Way" is reflected in Mathew's gospel, offering a broader application to the dynamic duality of Jesus' taking offense as read in Acts 9:1-3. Just as Luke records Jesus taking offense to the harm or assault made on those living in replication to his manner, Jesus also applies this same identity, including any person in need. He teaches that serving the one in need is a service to Him. It follows that it is not out of reach to argue that Jesus identifies in a transcendent way with the image bearer, both as a believer and as unknown (perhaps any in a space of benevolence).¹¹¹ *Here, the argument is*

¹⁰⁹ Luke develops the progression of boldness from the church that would continue through the face of opposition and challenge internally and externally. The narrative that the church is living out includes the victory of the gospel while ensuring the victory of the storytelling church to the world, to which it continues to be Jesus. The undaunting passion of witnessing to the world could not be missed. Luke records that "this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

¹¹⁰ More will be said about Saul later in this chapter's development of the Apologetic application of Jesus as applied to Saul.

¹¹¹ See Acts 9:1-6; Acts 9:22:1-16; Mathew 25: 40, 45.

that the disciple shares in the dynamic presence of Jesus working through them to serve the world.

Love as The Prominent Character of “The Way”

Those of The Way live the doctrine of love in the presence of a watching world. The full display of others-focused living is an argument and apology for God. Jesus said it would be by love that all would know and recognize His disciples.¹¹² Love is the tangible, decisive action disciples exercise to a watching world. Love lives out the narrative of the Gospel of Christ. Love lived is Lived Narrative Apologetics’ most prolific way to contend for God and His renewal program culminating in Christ. The character-shaping effect of love explicates how the watching world can see Jesus in how His church lives the way disciples live.

To develop this point further, consider the significance behind the demonstration of love by Jesus to the world, which the world, to that point, did not know (John 13:34-35). Jesus was the first demonstration of this decisive others-oriented living (Romans 5:8). His church would continue what He did and taught (1 John 3:16-17; Romans 12:9-21; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a; Ephesians 5:1-2; Colossian 3:14). The demonstration of love is facilitated by the help of the Holy Spirit, who was promised in concert with the command to love like Jesus (John 14:15-17, 25-27; 15:12-17, 26-27; 16:7-15).¹¹³

¹¹² See John 13:34-46.

¹¹³ The work of the Holy Spirit in Lived Narrative Apologetics will be further developed in the next chapter. Here, note that in the Gospels, the Holy Spirit precedes demonstration, not only in John but in each of the gospel accounts. By demonstration, we mean the work that one is called by God to do is facilitated and assisted by the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus contends that He would not leave his church and that the person of the Spirit would be in the disciples as He was with them. Note that Jesus was their advocate, help, teacher, and Emmanuel. The promise is that this presence would not be abandoned. The church has been granted the person and power of the

Note, the New Testament puts forth that The Holy Spirit's most transformative evidence of God at work in man is in the character-forming attribute of love (2 Corinthians 2:14; 3:2). It is out of love that Christ is followed and made manifest (John 13:34-36; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a). The story of God's love, lived by the church, is God's primary apology to a fallen world. In *You Are What You Love*, James K. A. Smith helps to establish the notion of being what you love through the liturgical nature of love and action. He writes, "If you are what you love, and your ultimate loves are formed and aimed by your immersion in practices and cultural rituals, then such practices fundamentally shape who you are."¹¹⁴ This project holds that the immersion into the story of God, a love story, would be most dynamically evidenced by one's life being shaped by love into love. The result is to become like the author in a transcendent, prophetic way: to affect the world like the Word made flesh. It is also what Jesus commands. Smith notes, "Jesus' command to follow Him is a command to align our loves and longings with his—to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all—a vision encapsulated by the shorthand 'the kingdom of God.'"¹¹⁵

The concept of being what one loves is grounded in the first-century community of disciples, whose origin is recorded in Acts and who liturgically live out the principles of love in Acts (Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; 5:13-14; 6:4, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 15:32-35, 36), becoming "other" (see Acts 11:26) as they engage the world.¹¹⁶ The disciples lived so distinctly that they were called "the

Holy Spirit to demonstrate the calling of love to the world. The new command can only be exercised by God's presence. Perhaps this is how God renovates and re-stories the world.

¹¹⁴ Smith, James K. A., *You Are What You Love* (Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition), 22.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁶ This notion of "the disciples being called Christians" will be further developed below. Being called Christian was evidence of the church becoming like Christ in mind and manner.

way,” and as “the way,” they were being read by the world they intruded into: a world they would turn “upside down.”

They radically lived love (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). They knew the value of love and were willing to die for one another (1 John 3:1-16). The robust renovation of the heart was profoundly evident, changing Jews and pagans to Christians. “Acts is a story of losing and gaining.”

Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that when love is lived, it allows for the most natural apologetic invitation and the church to enter the narrative of God before a watching world.¹¹⁷ For example, consider Paul’s opportunity to step into the narrative more informationally in prophetic fulfillment of what he believed he was assigned to carry out.¹¹⁸ From those interactions with everyone he lived the story out before, Luke records that those reading his life would request, “We desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.”¹¹⁹ The desire to “hear” is the aim of those living as Christ in the church. Being ready to give an answer is how the church continues the *doings* and *teachings* of Jesus (Acts 1:1; 1 Peter 3:15). When the story of love is lived, the reader (the world around us) will ask questions about the church’s reasons for hope (1 Peter 3:15).

Again, Lived Narrative Apologetics is an apologetic grounded in love,¹²⁰ and this project argues that love is the primary means of identifying the body of Christ.¹²¹ Additionally, love is

¹¹⁷ See 1 Peter 3:15 in tension with Acts 28.

¹¹⁸ See the earlier point of Paul’s conviction regarding the outcome of his story under the section where Paul’s life illustrates the plausibility structure.

¹¹⁹ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 28:22.

¹²⁰ Acts 1:1; Luke 24:44-49; John 1:12-14; John 3:14-17; 1 John. 3:16; 1 John. 4:17-21; Luke 10; Luke 15.

¹²¹ See John 13:34-35.

essential to establishing the plausibility of Christianity and capturing the imagination of living beyond oneself. Note the following to explain this concept.

N. T. Wright says, “knowing is love.” He suggests love from an epistemological standpoint.¹²² Love is the most significant way to know. He would argue that this includes one’s existence and the proper response to this existence.¹²³ Wright adds that Paul articulates the place of love in knowing God, self, and one’s existence.

Because love is the mode of knowing that -provides continuity between the present age and the age to come. Love is the constant between our present incomplete knowledge and the full knowledge yet to come... Paul’s Christian virtue is always responding, always discovering, the love that is the heart of true knowledge, the love inspired in him by the love revealed in, and flowing from, the gospel. Galatians again: “The life I do still live in the flesh, I live within the faithfulness of the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:20).¹²⁴

To this notion, Smith would contribute that love is the condition for knowledge.¹²⁵ That pursuit is what one becomes and takes on, what one is, and who one is. In fact, “You are what you love because you live toward what you want.”¹²⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, as noted earlier from his work in *Sapiential Apologetics*, adds that wisdom is lived knowledge.¹²⁷ When one lives the

¹²² About this notion, he says, “My proposal is that paying attention to Jesus as a real figure of first-century history can point some ways forward for the church and, through the church, for our misguided and muddled world. And for all this—and for the multiple resultant tasks in theology and mission—we need to understand, and put into practice, new ways of knowing: specifically, an epistemology of love.”
<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/02/loving-to-know>

¹²³ The way out is understanding creation as the gift of love, to which love is the appropriate response. Nevertheless, we cannot reach that true understanding of creation by a direct approach, for it quickly leads us back to idols. We must start with the center of creation: Jesus himself.

¹²⁴ <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/02/loving-to-know>

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹²⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 21, 31, 105.

knowledge of God (wisdom), they are living the love of God, which is God's greatest apologetic.¹²⁸ A disciple living love becomes an incarnational depiction of God's greatest lover and an expression of wisdom made manifest to the world, Jesus.¹²⁹ About this expression of love and wisdom made manifest, Paul says, "that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."¹³⁰

God's supreme argument is love. Love is witnessed in its fullness in the life of Jesus (Col. 2:3, 9; John 3:16-17). The doctrine of love is taught by Paul (Col. 3:12-14; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13:1-13; Ephesians 5:2). Love is the most relational means of helping a disenchanted culture reimagine life with God by creating plausibility structures and enlivening the justification of encountering Christ as genuine and superior, worthy to be followed.¹³¹ Therefore, an argument for love being the lynchpin for applying Lived Narrative Apologetic practice is developed as follows.

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my

¹²⁸ See John. 13:34-35; John 3:16; Romans 5:5-ff; 1 Corinthians 1: 30; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a; Romans 12:9-13; Colossians 3:12-14; Ephesians. 4:14-16.

¹²⁹ See Colossians 2:3; 1 Corinthians 1:30.

¹³⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Col 2:2-3.

¹³¹ Dallas Willard teaches a lecture about Jesus being the smartest man ever. The point of the lecture is that we will follow one we think is smarter than ourselves. The point, it seems, is not only a contrast to intelligence but that any and everyone's life is made better as Jesus leads and disciples that person. My point in this argument is that love is Jesus' supreme teaching. Living this knowledge demonstrates wisdom that appeals to the lives of one reading the disciple and will read the current culture, demonstrating its inability to offer what the wisdom of God offers in lived love.

disciples if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). Love is the means of knowing.¹³² Wisdom is lived knowledge.¹³³ Disciples must know the doctrine of love in order to live love.¹³⁴ Love is the knowledge that must be known and lived.¹³⁵ When love is lived, it will demonstrate a Christian worldview for the world to read, and love will read the world.¹³⁶ As disciples, following Jesus to love is the furtherance of Christ’s acts on earth.¹³⁷ Christ loved.¹³⁸

Furthermore, the narrative of God shows the story of love to be others-oriented, communal, and neighborly (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35).¹³⁹ Love is premeditated benevolence, eternal, before time, so when practiced in time, it is the answer that is on time.¹⁴⁰ Love is always the correct answer because it missionally manifests God’s response to the greatest human hurt (Acts

¹³² *Simply Christian* (51). Wright, in making a case for a legitimate epistemology to process the world, notes that there is a significant relationship and intertwined effort of deep investigation for the truth of something. He argues that how we know a thing and justify its truthfulness is like a relationship. One can argue that this relationship is the practice of disciples with the wisdom of God’s doctrine and the actualizing of such in the world that reads them. Wright says, “What we mean by ‘know’ is likewise in need of further investigation. To ‘know’ the deeper kinds of truth we have been hinting at is much more like ‘knowing’ a person—something which takes a long time, a lot of trust, and a good deal of trial and error—and less like ‘knowing’ about the right bus to take into town. It’s a kind of knowing in which the subject and the object are intertwined, so that you could never say that it was either purely subjective or purely objective.... One good word of this deeper and richer kind of knowledge, the kind that goes with the deeper and richer kind of truth, is ‘love.’”

¹³³ Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 20.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42. In *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, Vanhoozer uses the illustration of being a knight who learns and applies the doctrine of God as the character shaping narrative to wisely live.

¹³⁵ See Col. 2:3; Eph. 4:3.

¹³⁶ See 2 Cor. 3.

¹³⁷ See 1 Cor. 14:1; Jn. 13:34-35; Rom. 13.

¹³⁸ Jesus established the expectation of love and its duty. Paul, in his writings, contends that Jesus loved radically. See Romans 5:8; 4:25; 5:6; 8:32, 39. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a Paul describes 16 actions of love that Christians practice as the more excellent way. This way of love was first modeled by the Christ (John 3:16; 15:9-17).

¹³⁹ See Phil. 2:3-4; See Acts 4:32.

¹⁴⁰ See John 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:9; Romans 5:5-ff. See Acts 8:32-35.

7).¹⁴¹ Therefore, like Jesus, love was planned before time, is God's greatest gift, and is the singular application of heaven to human incapability (Acts 2:37; 3:19-25; 16:30-34; 17:31-32).¹⁴²

There is no problem in the human condition that is beyond the scope of love (Acts 13:38-39).¹⁴³

Practically, Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that living the love narrative of Scripture, the grounding of The Greater Narrative out of which Lived Narrative Apologetics is actualized, in an incarnational manner makes the Scripture tangible, giving one's witness a human platform to engage the plausibility of the Christian worldview.¹⁴⁴ Love confronts cultural constructs and redefines humility, community, and human value (offering an alternative worldview practice).¹⁴⁵ Lived Narrative Apologetics takes the story of love and offers it as proof/evidence of God's wisdom to a watching world in a complete, robust, and relevant sense. This character-shaping doctrine established how the church lived and had dealings. According to Luke, this unique manner caused the reader (a watching world) to call disciples Christians. Note Michael Green's explanation of this point from his book *Thirty Years That Changed the World*.

The Meaning of Christian as The Way

¹⁴¹ Wright, N. T.. *Simply Christian* (Chapter 8). HarperCollins. See Acts 2:22-24; 17:30-31.

¹⁴² Wright, N. T.. *Simply Christian* (Chapter 6). HarperCollins. See Acts 10:43.

¹⁴³ See 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a., Perhaps an exception to applying love as the supreme answer to the human condition is one's rejection of love. Paul, in Romans 1:18-35, would argue that the revelation of God and thus the doctrines of God are deniable. Therefore, the doctrine and transformative power of love in the lives of a community may well be nullified when those truths are rejected, suppressed, exchanged, or rebelled against.

¹⁴⁴ Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne, *The Gospel Comes With A House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2018). The testimony of Rosaria Butterfield is an example of this model being demonstrated and creating space for a heart change that allows the principles of love (LNA in application) to be displayed and then establishes the plausibility for the Christian worldview to one who lives outside of it. In this case, it was one active in the LGBTQ community but then left this worldview to embrace the biblical narrative of marriage. The chapter entitled "Our Post-Christian World: The Kindness of Hospitality" 47-64.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 109. The church lives as living epistles.

First, Green illustrates the impact of lived narrative in his commentary on Acts 11:26. There, he explains that the term “Christian” is rich in its form: “The origin of the term is obviously related to Christ, but its form is interesting.”¹⁴⁶ The observing, watching world gave the disciples a name that correlated to the official designation of the emperor Augustus.¹⁴⁷ Green correlates this same practice to what was happening with the church and its similarities to Jesus Christ. He describes that those who follow Jesus Christ are recognized and lauded, like those who followed the emperor, Augustus. The name was an indication of their behavior. With Augustus, those who represented him, reported to him, and preserved his interest were called Augustiani. This same naming practice was the precedent used for naming the followers of Jesus.¹⁴⁸ The Christians were followers, as evidenced by their speech, behavior, way of life, and manner, reminding the watcher of that relationship.¹⁴⁹

Second, as mentioned earlier, it can be argued that Jesus is represented in the church and that the church, in some way, is Jesus.¹⁵⁰ Acts most dynamically captures the ongoing actions and teachings of Jesus in depicting the disciples as “The Way.” Darrell Bock, in his commentary, says, “the way, is the only early name for Christians¹⁵¹ sometimes referred to as ‘the way of the Lord’ or ‘the way of God’ (Acts 18:25-26).”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Michael Green, *Thirty Years That Changed the World*, 57. In this point, the note also the narrative of love as evidence of for being a follower of Jesus.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁵⁰ This will be discussed more through this project.

¹⁵¹ See Acts 19:9, 23, 24:14, 22.

¹⁵² Bock, *Acts*, 356.

What will now be considered is Lived Narrative Apologetics illustrated in Acts 9 through the encounter of Saul and Jesus. This encounter is especially significant as it includes the interconnectedness of Christ as the church and the church as Christ, the mysterious *entendre* used by Luke in his record (particularly in the designation, “The Way”). The mysterious presence of Christ in the church is evident in the history of Acts, though it is troubling for scholars to arrive at an exact meaning of the expression regarding the wholeness of Christ. With the above work in mind, the remainder of this chapter will introduce these elements, and the next chapter will address them in more detail.¹⁵³

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.”¹⁵⁴

Consider the following four brief observations from this text.¹⁵⁵ First, how would Saul find those of the “the way?” (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, 22). The Way, belonging to it, recognized as it, speaking for it, persecuted because of it, is synonymous to one who fully embraced being a follower and an open adherent to Christ in total and complete submission in all of one’s ways; a life that reflects truth (as determined by the word of God) and as the realization

¹⁵³ The next chapter will offer an overview of some works that have been done to explain *Totus Christus*, though not exhaustively. The point of this project is simply to contend that the apologetic power of the church in living out the narrative of God, as explained through the earlier sections, is additionally grounded in the work of Christ and The Holy Spirit and, therefore, transcendent in effect. The plausibility of the Christian Worldview, its story, and its superior way of living is thus a work of God as it relates to changing beliefs. The practical living of the church in the community is a space in which every disciple who makes up the church can live in the story while Christ lives through them. The *entendre* of the way is realized both as Christ and as his church.

¹⁵⁴ Acts 9:1-5 NASB1995, <https://bible.com/bible/100/act.9.1-5.NASB1995>

¹⁵⁵ This concept of the interconnectedness of the way people and Christ will be more fully developed in the following chapter. Here the concept is introduced.

of the planned purpose God has for abundant life. This is a modeled expression of people convinced this is the truth.

Second, the impact of this “way of living” is confrontational. The conviction, as lived out by the disciples, confronted other narratives. Though not explicitly stated, it may likely be the case that the persecution carried out by Saul is in response to the confrontation of “the way” worldview against the extant Jewish religious power.

Third, those of the way were convinced that this way is God’s way (Acts 9:2). By convinced, it is meant the way Luke has used the term in Acts 1:3: the undeniable evidence of a resurrected Lord, who has shifted worldviews and shaped stories, one who “presented Himself alive after his suffering, by many convincing proofs.” This convincing is very close to conviction but should be distinguished by the reality that disciples have reason and evidence, proofs for their conviction, the primary of which is the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁵⁶ These convinced Jesus followers living in a way that confronts Saul’s way. The Lived Narrative Apologetics actualized in this church assaults others’ lives. The intrusion into other worldviews is like Jesus’ intrusion into the world, “light springing into darkness.”¹⁵⁷

Fourth, notice that the followers, “the way” (the disciples of Jesus), were persecuted, verse 2. Paul persecuted disciples, verse 2. Jesus engages Paul and asks why he persecuted Him, verse 4; therefore, Jesus speaks of himself as The Way. It appears the disciples lived in such a manner that their identity and convictions were like Jesus, whom Saul openly lived against (Acts 9:1; 22:4; 26:9). Bock is correct in “the way” being an early name for disciples, but he does not go far enough. This designation is claimed to be Christ Himself (Acts 9:4-5; 22:8; 26:14-15).

¹⁵⁶ See Acts 1:1-3; 1Peter 3:15; Acts 17:30-33.

¹⁵⁷ See Mathew 4:16.

Jesus is represented in the way; the way is the makeup and identifying nature of disciples.¹⁵⁸ The disciples are the church. Therefore, Jesus is represented in the church through the disciples, by what they do, teach, “the way” they live, the message they proclaim, the truth they live by and defend, and the martyrdom they undergo. This mysterious transcendent wholeness is how the church continues as Jesus and with Jesus.

Though it is unclear what the ontological presence of Christ in the church is, it is clear that the disciples live, proclaim, and teach in a manner that necessitated being called Christians.¹⁵⁹ It is also the conclusion that “the way” implies the chosen life, the standard of living, and the manner of Christianity.¹⁶⁰ Bock contends that the designations all describe a feature of Christianity that can point to some aspect of Jesus. Jesus lived the story of heaven for all to experience as He manifested the plausibility of a more robust vantage and means of making sense of reality, a compelling alternative and consistent grounding for living. Perhaps this is most significantly illustrated in Luke’s account of Lived Narrative Apologetics practiced by Jesus in his engagement with Saul and then replicated in Saul (later Paul) to the world, to which this project now turns.

The following chapter will continue the formative work of Lived Narrative Apologetics as an apologetic with a worldview-shaping capacity; this will be illustrated through the taxonomy of the proposed apologetic method as seen in Acts with Jesus/The Church in “The Way” from Acts 9. Then, the chapter will additionally include a synthesis of how the principles

¹⁵⁸ See Act 9:1-2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

¹⁵⁹ See Acts 11:26.

¹⁶⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 356.

of apologetics mentioned in this chapter are realized in the practice of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

CHAPTER 4

LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Chapter three of this project worked to articulate Lived Narrative Apologetics as an apologetic expression made by the Church to the world. Additionally, it offered a brief illustration of the presence of Jesus in the Church as recorded in Acts.¹ Several earlier discussed points will be revisited in this chapter to develop the notion of Christ in the Church and the concept that every local church is a local Christ. A brief consideration of Augustine's doctrine of the *Totus Christus*, "the whole Christ" with Christ as Head and the Church as Body, will be offered. "The whole Christ" doctrine seems helpful here as this project will include the historical progression of the Church in Acts and especially Acts 9. Also, this chapter will continue the formative work of Lived Narrative Apologetics as an apologetic that has worldview shaping capacity and that can be actualized by the Church in the world in the same manner as Jesus in the Church as recorded in Acts.²

Additionally, this chapter will propose that certain grounding principles or a taxonomy make up the methodological process of Lived Narrative Apologetics, practiced by Christ in the Church, as illustrated in the encounter of Saul. Furthermore, it will be briefly argued that Paul practiced the same taxonomy while witnessing to the world. This project contends that the most

¹ See Acts 1:1-8.

² This notion was articulated in chapter two considering N. T. Wright and Trevin Wax's definition of a worldview and its function. There, it was explicated that one's plausibility structure is established the ability of one's worldview to answer life's most important questions. This concept will be further developed in the example of Saul of Tarsus and his shift to Paul and especially his change from a worldview shaped by Judaism to a worldview shaped by Christ.

important of the grounding principles of the apologetic is within the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

THE MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH

In chapter two of this project, it is argued that Lived Narrative Apologetics is a storytelling practice in which the Church joins God in the work He is doing through His renewal project.³ The Greater Narrative, out of which Lived Narrative Apologetics functions, tells the story in which the Church and the disciples of Christ participate. As argued earlier, the Church is the culminating act of God, “the breaking-in of God's Kingdom” into the world of corruption, decay, and death.⁴ Act five is New Testament Christianity; this is “our present act.”⁵ This act is to presuppose all the others and to be conscious of living as the people through whom the narrative in question (The Greater Narrative of God) is now moving toward its final destination.⁶ About this act, Wright says, “Indeed, telling the story of Jesus as the climax of the story of Israel and the focal point of the story of the creator's redemptive drama with his world is itself a major task of the fifth act...”⁷

The fifth act is the time within which the Church exists. Christ continues what He *did* and *taught* through the Church in the world God desires to make right.⁸ Three questions deserve

³ Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

attention, as this project develops this chapter's aim. Is there Biblical grounding for the notion of God at work in the Church to accomplish His renewal plan? How is Christ continuing what He did and taught? In what ways can the presence of God accomplish this mission, this fifth act agenda? Consider the following in response to these questions.

First, is there Biblical grounding for the notion of God at work in the Church to accomplish His renewal plan?

There is significant biblical grounding in Luke's Acts to establish the work of God in the Church. The enigmatic presence and activity of God at work with the Church is captured throughout the historical sketching of Luke in Acts. The presence of God is promised in The Gospels and actualized in the historical text of Acts (Mathew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26-27; John 14:15-26, 15:26-27; 16:5-15; Acts 1:8; 2:32-33, 38-39).⁹

The passages above indicate both a promise and pattern that connect the presence of Jesus in the Church and the continuation of what He began to "do and teach" (see Acts 1:1). This pattern includes the promise of the Holy Spirit, who would serve the Church (especially the disciples) in the same fashion of Jesus during His earthly ministry.¹⁰ This pattern also includes the Holy Spirit's presence as the power needed to accomplish God's mission (ACT 5).¹¹ The

⁹ The goal is to connect the promised presence of the Holy Spirit to his actualizing of those promises in the church, which is illustrated in Acts. This presence, though mysterious, is grounded in the scripture, recording God at work in the church. Later, consideration will be given to similar distinctions made from Augustine's doctrine of the Totus Christus. Here, the aim is to note clear passages that present God's "doing" in the church.

¹⁰ See John 14:15-26, 15:26-27; 16:5-15. The Gospel account describes the coming Holy Spirit as the promised advocate, helper, counselor, guide, and teacher like (one of similar quality) Jesus. The Holy Spirit's work is to continue what Jesus had begun for the church in a transcendent manner. Christ had a limited ministry term of about three years. The Holy Spirit's work with the church and every disciple would be as long as the age would exist. The church's mission would include God's presence with them until the end (Mathew 28:18-20).

¹¹ About this power, Darrell Bock says, "The Spirit is tied to power...which refers here to being empowered to speak boldly by testifying to the message of God's work through Jesus." Bock, *Acts*, 63.

Holy Spirit's power in witnessing and working is also the very means of saving every seeker. Luke reveals that the Holy Spirit's promised power is the work of God to save and the heart-changing agent throughout the record of Acts.

For example, Luke writes, "A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."¹² In his commentary on *Acts*, Bock says, "God creates the initiative to faith from within."¹³ Additionally, David G. Peterson, in *The Acts of the Apostles*, comments, "Lydia's engagement with what Paul was saying and God's sovereignty in the process of conversion are highlighted together" (cf. 13:48 note; 2 Cor. 4:5–6; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 2 Thess. 2:13–14). Stott observes, "although the message was Paul's, the saving initiative was God's. Paul's preaching was not effective in itself; the Lord worked through it. And the Lord's work was not in itself direct; he chose to work through Paul's preaching. It is always the same."¹⁴

Fundamentally, people are saved because God calls, draws, convicts, and transforms them (Acts 2:39; John 6:44–45; 12:32; John 16:8; Acts 2:37; Acts 16:14). This renewing work of God argues for the dynamic truth that every aspect of salvation is the work of God, not of man. Marshall, in his commentary, agrees, "Her (as are all) conversion is attributed to the fact that the Lord opened her heart (for the phrase cf. Lk 24:45; 2 Macc. 1:4) and thus set his seal on the obedience of the missionaries...at his bidding."¹⁵ Note, the seal that God adds is on the worker and the work being done. Therefore, the work, or as Marshall says, "bidding" is composed of the

¹² *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ac 16:14.

¹³ Bock, *Acts*, 534.

¹⁴ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 461. Peterson also cites Stott 1990, 263.

¹⁵ Marshall, *The Acts of The Apostles*, 267. First Parenthetical statement added for emphasis.

providential efforts of God to establish occasions to connect with a seeking world (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16). It furthermore includes the work of The Holy Spirit in bearing witness to seekers, the prophetic work of disciples who actualize their calling to witness, the interplay of the Word of God as a living and active agent of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit to make war against all false thoughts; this offers life-giving power to change one's conscience to receive the promises of God. Christ is not absent in Acts but is displaying His reign in part through the activity of the Spirit.¹⁶

In consideration of the enigmatic presence of God at work in the Church, several observations can be made. One observation is that the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the Church always precedes the worldview-changing effect of the Church when they live out The Narrative of God in ordinary ways. About this observation, Michael Green, in his book, *Thirty Years That Changed The World*, adds that the mission of the Church and presence of the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. Green writes, “Through the Spirit and mission, the kingdom is demonstrated to the world before the return of the King. The Spirit and the Church belong together, but it is noteworthy in Acts that the Spirit always takes the lead. The Church can only live by evangelizing and by following the paths that the Spirit indicates.”¹⁷ This project agrees with Green, and this also includes the other side of evangelism, apologetics. As Green notes, the demonstration of the kingdom, the lived narrative, is accomplished by a spirit-filled Church that then steps into the occasions they are led to by the Spirit.¹⁸

¹⁶ Keener, *Acts*, 160. CF. Turner, *Power*, 277-78, 296-97, 305; O. Maainville, “Jésus et l’Esprit dans L’oeuvre de Luc:Éclairage à partir d’Ac 2,33,” *ScEs* 42 (2, 1990) 193-208.

¹⁷ Green, *Thirty Years That Changed the World*, 254.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 252-254.

A second observation is that as disciples have their lives on display, their message heard, and their service/ministry given, it happens within the unseen efforts of God at work simultaneously, mysteriously, but extraordinarily. This change and shift in nature and character is the work of the Holy Spirit narratizing the lives of those that make up the Church. Green further notes, “When we look at how the Spirit operates in the Acts, it is exciting to see the effect upon believers.”¹⁹ The effect is realized, but the person and His presence are divinely unseen (John 3:8). The Church demonstrates a people thrilled to belong, prayerful, bold, hungry to learn, willing to give, and longing to share.²⁰ Green concludes, “It is a mark of the Spirit flooding a life.”²¹

The record of Acts illustrates the leading and then life-changing interplay of the Holy Spirit with the Church. Notice the promised presence of God at work in the Church through examples in Acts and the patterned actions of God’s presence to accomplish His renewal program. *The biblical grounding of Lived Narrative Apologetics as a model to affect change is realized in these historical illustrations. God’s enigmatic presence is at work in the primitive birth of the Church and then perpetuates through Luke’s historical tracing.* What is of note in this section is the reoccurring elements of how God accomplishes His efforts, both in the beginning of the Church and through the strategy of its mission. Several encounters further explain this (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16). Also, note several examples of the pattern of God at work in the continued work of Jesus through the Church (Acts 1:1) or *Act Five*.

¹⁹ Ibid., 261.

²⁰ Ibid., 261-262.

²¹ Ibid., 262.

First, note God the Spirit at work in Acts 2.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance... And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?... we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”²²

This first encounter bridges the promise of the Spirit in the gospels with the fulfillment of His empowerment to the disciples to accomplish the mission of speaking God’s message to the end of the earth (Acts 1:4-8; Luke 24:47, 49). Peterson says, “As promised in Acts 1:4–5, 8, the Holy Spirit is poured out on the disciples of Jesus, to begin His work of renewal in Jerusalem and make it possible for His salvation to reach ‘to the ends of the earth’ (cf. Is. 49:10).”²³ Keener observes that The Spirit inspires proclamation (2:14-40), producing a community that can live out the ideals of the Kingdom (2:14-47).²⁴ The Holy Spirit is the means by which the narrative is lived. Additionally, note the event itself. The presence of God in the Church facilitates the possibility for the work to be done. Stott observes, “His coming was accompanied by three supernatural signs—sound, a sight and strange speech. First, there came from heaven... Secondly, there appeared to them... Thirdly, all were filled...”²⁵

²² *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 2:1-12. The work of Craig S. Keener; I. Howard Marshall, John W. Stott, Darrell Bock, and David G. Peterson will especially be considered for the following illustrations. Several other supportive works will be mentioned in concert with these scholars.

²³ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 129.

²⁴ Keener, *Acts*, 121.

²⁵ Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 62.

In this first case, the elements of the presence of God in each encounter become a pattern through the text of Acts. First, God the Spirit fills the witness:²⁶ “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”²⁷ Marshall comments that the word *fill* “is used when people are given an initial endowment of the spirit to fit them for God’s service (9:17; Luke 1:15) and also when they are inspired to make important utterances (Acts 4: 8, 31; 13: 9)...”²⁸ The Christian filled with the Spirit becomes the Spirit’s mouthpiece. ²⁹ The Spirit-filled disciple tells the story of God’s renewal promises to a world that needs restoration. Acts indicates that what follows being filled is the act of speaking (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 9:36; 11:24; contrast 13:10; 19:29,31; 9:17; 13:9).³⁰ Keener notes that “Luke’s particular emphasis regarding the Spirit is empowerment for cross-cultural prophetic witness (Acts 1:8) ...”³¹

²⁶ The related adjective *plērēs* is mostly used to describe the state or condition of being ‘full of the Holy Spirit’ or of some grace (Lk. 4:1; Acts 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 9:36; 11:24; contrast 13:10; 19:29). In such cases it refers to a permanent endowment that becomes part of a person’s character. The verb *plēroō* is applied to those who ‘were being filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit’ in 13:52 (the imperfect tense here suggesting a continuing process; cf. Eph. 5:18). Cf. Peterson, ‘Fulfillment’, 85–87, on the language of fulfilment in Luke-Acts.

David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009).

²⁷ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ac 2:2.

²⁸ Marshall, *The Acts of The Apostles*, 69.

²⁹ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 77.

³⁰ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 133.

³¹ Keener, Craig S.. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 1* (p. 1469). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Second, The Holy Spirit establishes an audience for Spirit-filled individuals to speak the narrative, the words of God:³² “Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together...”³³ The crowd is said to have come together at the “sound.” John B. Polhill, in his commentary, rightly asks, “What sound, that of the rushing wind or that coming from the Spirit-filled Christians? One cannot be certain since Luke left out more detail than he told.”³⁴ One cannot be certain what the elements concerning the sound were, but it can be argued that the person responsible for the sound is the Holy Spirit. Hendrickson observes, “We assume that the term *noise* refers to the noise of the violent wind (v. 2) and not to the speaking of the believers. We visualize the people gathering in groups to determine the origin of the sound. As they move toward the place where the believers are, they hear them speaking in numerous tongues. The result is that they are confused.”³⁵ Bruce comments, “Many of the visitors were astonished as they heard the loud praises of God uttered by the disciples in inspired languages (this, rather than the noise of rushing wind, is what is meant by the ‘sound’ of v. 6) because they recognized the indigenous languages and dialects of their native lands.”³⁶ The phenomenon of the unexpected communicating universally is a bridge from God to man. The mysterious work of God creates an economy for His narrative to be lived and explained to those who would want to know “what

³² Earlier, it was argued that the filled disciples subsequently speak due to their filling. The contention is that the audience with which a filled disciple or storyteller shares the narrative of God is supplied by God. Therefore, the filling and the listener are given and drawn by God. In this case, the mysterious means by which God draws is the descent of the Holy Spirit.

³³ New American Standard Bible, Acts 2:5–6.

³⁴ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 101.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 54.

does this mean” (Acts 2:12; 1 Peter 3:15). Notice the effort of God to complete the renewing process by preparing the storytellers and supplying the persons to whom the followers tell the story. God establishes the individuals in the Church to uniquely be vessels that take their place in the efforts of God, the story of God. God also prepares the watching world that will come to witness the narrative lived before them. By lived, we mean the complete depiction of the story of God in word, speech, actions, and character. God supplies the people in demand and expects His Church to supply the narrative that meets the need.

Third, the heart-changing means of transformation is acted upon the seeker by the Spirit for conversion.³⁷ There is an unseen dynamic at work in the witness of the Church to the heart of the recipient of that testimony, and that unseen agency is the work of the Holy Spirit within the witness (Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31). Luke records,

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”³⁸

What prompted the effect of the narrational overview of Peter’s speech that would pierce the listeners to the heart? The answer, it seems, is the work of the Holy Spirit, who witnesses as the church witnesses. The apostles were vested with heavenly power—that power by which, in

³⁷ As was argued earlier, the means of conversion and even the plausibility of the Christian worldview is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is contended in this project that Lived Narrative Apologetics is an apologetic practice that the church lives in concert with God’s promise and presence to affect change to those who witness the story lived before them. The church’s awareness of the narrative is given confidence by the power of God through the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit and Jesus for the will of God. Disciples, then, are as much watching the work of God as they are witnessing to expedite that salvific work.

³⁸ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 2:36–39.

the event, their mighty works were accomplished, and their preaching made effective.³⁹ The primary work was witness-bearing.⁴⁰ Bruce offers light into the unseen agency of the Holy Spirit, who works in the apostles' witness. He writes,

For they were not only heralds of the good news, but witnesses as well, and not simply witnesses on their own initiative, but witnesses under the direction of the divine witness, the Holy Spirit, imparted by God to all who obey him. In these words, we mark again the primitive community's awareness of being indwelt and possessed by the Spirit to such a degree that they were his organ of expression.⁴¹

As the organ of expression, the Church works with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is at work with the Church to exercise His promised agenda to “convict the world concerning sin.”⁴² Conviction was the effect of the witnessing efforts of the apostles, organs of the Spirit, to their watching world. By conviction, we mean what Darrell Bock articulates, commenting, “Moved by an emotional and ethical concern, the crowd senses the need to respond to this message.”⁴³ This expression appears only here in the New Testament... The verb refers to a sharp pain or stab, often associated with emotion.⁴⁴ Marshall comments, “The thought is of being brokenhearted and standing under the conviction of sin.”⁴⁵ Keener writes, “Conscience-stricken over their corporate failure in rejecting their own graciously God-given king (2:36c),...The inspired message produces deep emotional conviction (cut to the heart, 2:37) which can produce

³⁹ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 36.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴² *New American Standard Bible*, Jn 16:8.

⁴³ Bock, *Acts*, 141.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

⁴⁵ Marshall, *The Acts of The Apostles*, 80.

rage (5:33; 7:54), or, as here, desperation.”⁴⁶ *The Spirit, through the apostles and the Church, extends His work to shape the hearts of the world; He engages by conviction resulting from the combined witness of Himself with the disciples (Acts 5:32; John 14:26-27; 15:26-27; 16:7-11).*

The result of the witness, the encounter of God through the Church with man, is what Keener describes as a choice of two produced results: rage (Acts 5:33; 7:54) or desperation.⁴⁷ The work of the Church is in its witness, and that witness is done in a manner that helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation.⁴⁸ Out of the encounter of the facts, the narrative presented, the corrective power moves the reader/watcher to desire the means of change renewal. Hence, the repeated question in various forms in Acts is, “What shall we do?”⁴⁹ “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?”⁵⁰ “Who are You, Lord?”⁵¹ “What is the reason for which you have come?”⁵² “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”⁵³ This space of conviction in an encounter with God’s narrative is the turn from correction to conversion. The critique of the Holy Spirit through the living testimony of the Church’s witness

⁴⁶ Keener, *Acts*, 162.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 64.

⁴⁹ New American Standard Bible, Acts 2:37.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Acts 8:34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Acts 9:5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Acts 10:21.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Acts 16:30.

leads to a conviction, which can turn one to a desperate desire to try the narrative on or turn away to a lesser story.⁵⁴

Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that the Church's witness takes place in its awareness and realization that it is within the story of God that has the renewing means to re-story another. This experience means that it can testify directly to what God is doing through Jesus as it speaks prophetically of what God has done for everyday persons in ordinary means. Bock writes, "The disciples' direct and real experience of Jesus and his resurrection qualifies them as witnesses, but

⁵⁴ An example of the negative is the story of Stephen in Acts 7. Several observations can be made from that text. Note the following. "This is the Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.' He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us" (Acts 7:37-38 NIV).

The narrative Moses lived under was a story that was meant to be lived out and continued. It was also the mechanism he used to critique the current ignorance about the worldview being lived out before this Jewish population at that point. The Holy Spirit was working in Stephen's life to manifest that narrative and disrupt the ignorance of an underdeveloped story of the Jews who did not grasp the implications of the narrative in which they lived. This is the second point in which the apologetic practice of the Holy Spirit in the church was using story to correct the story in which the Jewish people lived. In both cases, the *Deuteronomy 18:15-18* passage is referenced to communicate that this living word was misunderstood and that its meaning was grounded in the historical person of Jesus. These incidents include coupling of the work of Spirit-filled disciples who are speaking the narrative of God that looks back to an Act prior (Act 3-4) and looking forward to communicating the meaning of the Act that is in extent now (Act 5) with the hopes of inviting those who have speculation about its truthfulness (2 Cor.10:5) and inviting them to try it on.

Additionally, we note that even when the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit has joined in the witnessing Act of the church, it does not always conclude with a seeming positive conversion. However, it could be that the immediacy of the conversion is what is not seen and not the effect (Note: Saul is in the audience).

Suppose it is the case that God's narrative has a spiritual effect that cannot be stopped and always affects change (Is. 55:5-13). In that case, it is plausible that Saul, who heard this message from Stephen and gave the order for his death, was at minimum exposed to the power of narrative and then would have the added presence of Christ (the union again at work) to lead to his change ultimately.

In tracing the elements of God's apology at work through a lived narrative methodology, it seems this would be a first instance of the profound allegiance that Christians had to the narrative (Acts 26), which all contributed in a mysterious way to the heart change and then conversion of Saul to Paul.

Even Paul himself acknowledged that he made a total turnabout to this story after the impact of meeting the storytelling way community and its author of faith, Jesus, on the way.

the Spirit will give them capabilities to articulate their experience with boldness.”⁵⁵ This witnessing effort applies to the ongoing effort of God to invite the world into His narrative to take their place as storytellers, their lives being a powerful testimony of God’s life-changing evidence of the resurrected King.

Second, note that this pattern is consistent with the significant conversion narratives of Acts and allows one to logically conclude the ongoing presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit through the Church in every movement of the Church. It follows, then, that the changing of hearts, instigation of encounters, and success of an apologetic approach are directly correlated to the will of God. In each case, the Holy Spirit prepares the witness and recipient and is subsequently responsible for heart change (receptivity to the narrative on display before them).⁵⁶

1. In Acts 1-2, this providential touch is illustrated in the first message of the gospel, where the audience experiences the life of Jesus as well as the immediate work of the Holy Spirit to draw the crowd to spirit-filled storytellers sent to make sense of the narrative that was lived before this watching crowd in Jerusalem.⁵⁷ The pattern is present with the descent of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the apostles, the crowd assembled because of the Spirit’s action, and the decision for Jews to become Jesus’ followers.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 64.

⁵⁶ See the earlier note in concert with Craig Keener’s observation that not all encounters lead to positive conversion. As in the case of Stephen, a spirit-filled witness (Acts 6), his wisdom was rejected, and the move of the Holy Spirit in his testimony fostered rage, resulting in his martyrdom. Perhaps this was/is one of the most profound realizations of being a witness for Christ.

⁵⁷ See earlier comments regarding Acts 2:1-6.

⁵⁸ These examples illustrate a pattern throughout Acts along with principles observed in the biblical grounding of Lived Narrative Apologetics. These points argue that the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the church always precedes the worldview effect of the church on the watching world. Additionally, as disciples have their lives

2. In Acts 8:26,29, The providential efforts of God are recorded with the direction of the Holy Spirit to Phillip to go south in the desert with no other explanation as to what would transpire. Phillip would meet an Ethiopian traveler and then be encouraged to join himself to that chariot where the man happened to be reading scripture. The prophetic moment allows for a discussion of a historical occasion of events that just took place in Jerusalem, resulting in the urgent desire to become a follower of Jesus.
3. In Acts 9:4-6, 10-16, we notice the leadership presence of Jesus, whose involvement is dynamically guiding Saul, and then Ananias to finalize Saul's choice to become a follower of Jesus.⁵⁹
4. In Acts 10:9-16,19 and 11:1-18, the instruction of the Holy Spirit was to Peter, who communicated a worldview-changing message to Cornelius. Again, the Spirit-filled storyteller is preparing, and the audience is waiting. The Spirit's heart-changing efforts are evident in the entire household's choice to become Jesus' followers.
5. In Acts 13:2, we observe the call of the Holy Spirit to separate Saul and Barnabas for further work that he had for them to do. Notice again "in Acts that the Spirit always takes the lead," even as He invites followers to step into the story written through their everyday living.⁶⁰

on display, living the narrative, they do so within the unseen efforts of God at work simultaneously, mysteriously but extraordinarily. The pattern consists of at least three fundamental aspects. *First*, God the Spirit fills the witness. *Second*, The Holy Spirit establishes an audience for spirit-filled individuals to speak the narrative, the words of God. *Third*, God the Spirit acts in a heart-changing means to transform the seeker for conversion.

The goal is to offer examples to demonstrate this pattern through the work of Luke in Acts. The final point of this chapter will examine the conversion of Saul to explain how to apply Lived Narrative Apologetics.

⁵⁹ Again, more will be said about this encounter in the later section of this chapter. Saul serves as a primary example of Lived Narrative Apologetics at work with the church and God's work in the church to accomplish the success of this apologetic model.

⁶⁰ Green, *Thirty Years That Changed the World*, 254.

6. In Acts 16:6-10, the directive of the Holy Spirit was for Saul to go to Macedonia.⁶¹
7. In Acts 16:14, the Holy Spirit is responsible for personally opening hearts, as in the book of Acts 16.

In summation of this point, if one accepts that apologetics is one side of a two-sided coin (as was earlier argued), then one can respectfully acknowledge that the evangelistic mission of Christ through the Church is successful because of the work of Christ in the world. God is at work in the witness of every witness.⁶² God offers a living narrative (a living word; see Hebrews 4:12) as He providentially sets the occasions for one's witness. God is responsible for collaborating with every disciple as ambassadors and as a team on the mission the Church joins Him to accomplish (2 Corinthians 5:18-6:2; Matthew 28:18-20).

Second, how is Christ continuing what he did and taught?

⁶¹John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1984). In his text, Stott keenly observes what takes place in denial of the Holy Spirit. He says, "I agree with Cambell Morgan who wrote: "That invasion of Europe was not in the mind of Paul, but it was in evidently in the mind of the Spirit" (Morgan, 287). Stott further comments concerning the denial of the Holy Spirit in 16:6 and Jesus not allowing them to enter Asia and Bithynia in 16:7. He notes that it has been conjectured from the fact that Peter later wrote to the Christian dispersion in these parts, including Asia and Bithynia, that Paul was kept from evangelizing there in order to make way for Peter (Stott, 258-260). This note could have some conflict in consideration of Acts 19:10. Luke records that Paul later influenced Asia through the disciples and the work at the school of Tyrannus.

Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit seems to be very intentional about who joins Him in his work. There are several places where we see the God's intentional moves with persons that are (for reasons only God knows) chosen to accompany him to do the work he has to do (see for example Acts 1:24; 7:55; 8:26; 9:10-11, 15-16; 11:12,18; 13:2, 47; 16:6-10 [here, the negative prohibition and the positive door of advancement is discernable as the Spirit's intentional efforts]; 18:9-11; 19:21; 20:22-23, 28; 21:4, 10-11; 23:11; 26:16-18; 27:23-25. In these examples, there are diverse occasions of the direct and sometimes indirect behest of the Spirit of Jesus, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, all toward the same advancement of the message of Light (Acts 26:23). The Story of God is being lived, and the world is invited into it to take their places in the book of life. The Holy Spirit is intentional in how that narrative is being lived/told in each case and who is responsible for telling the story to which audience, i.e., Peter in Bithynia and Paul in Rome.

⁶² See John 15:26-27.

Christ is continuing what he did and taught through his Church. As argued above, God is mysteriously and intentionally at work to accomplish His strategy to witness with the Church. This dual and dynamic witness effort is noted through the Scripture. This mysterious presence has also been discussed through theological channels for some time. Chiefly among these discussions are the dynamic representations of Christ's body advanced from the doctrine of *Totus Christus* espoused by St. Augustine.

Totus Christus, or "the whole Christ," is an ecclesial proposition that begins with Jesus Christ, who has chosen to unite Himself to His people in such a way that He is their head, and they are members of His body, both, together, forming the whole Christ. Augustine offers several depictions and metaphors through his reading of Psalms and the New Testament that allow one to see the dynamic intercourse of Christ in the Church. The doctrine is grounded in two primary texts: Acts 9:4–5 and Matthew 25:31–46.⁶³

In the doctrine of "the whole Christ," Jesus' connection with His Church goes beyond a mere external identification. A marriage bond with Jesus and the Church exists through the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is united with His Church, and His Church is united with Him; He participates in His Church, and His Church participates in Him. This communion is so profound that it is described by Augustine as the whole Christ, a depth and mysterious union like that of husband and bride or a head and body. This doctrine seems to speak positively to the identity-forming nature of the Church and its mission to accomplish the work of Jesus. In her article, Kimberly Baker notes that this new identity forms the Church's mission as it joins Christ in a

⁶³ The effort here is to maintain an evangelical depiction of the union of Christ in the church, or the mysterious presence of Christ in the church rather than a Catholic portrayal of Augustine's doctrine.

mission of love that unites people to one another as it unites them to God.⁶⁴ There are myriad concerns regarding the implications of this doctrine that have been discussed in depth.⁶⁵

The point here is to recognize the existence of this doctrine and observe that there seems to be some positive place of “The Whole Christ” doctrine in Lived Narrative Apologetics to indicate how Christ is at work in the Church. This consideration is both with restraint and balance, valuing the work of scholars who have treated this subject with much seriousness.⁶⁶ The “mysterious means” of what that likeness is in totality is not the aim of this project, but the reality of the discussion is recognized and respected. Several points can be made in

⁶⁴ Kimberly Baker, Augustine’s Doctrine of The *Totus Christus*: Reflecting on The Church as Sacrament of Unity (HORIZONS 37/1 (2010):7-24. Abstract: This Article examines Augustine’s doctrine of the *Totus Christus*, “the whole Christ,” with Christ as Head and the church as body. It considers the new identity as Christ that Christians receive in the sacraments of initiation that unite individuals in the church community and the sacramental presence of the church in the world as one of unifying love. This new identity forms the church for mission as it joins Christ in a mission of love that unites people to one another as it unites them to God. The church joins Christ in solidarity with those in need, thus radiating Christ’s unifying, transformative love in the world. The article suggests that Augustine’s view of the *Totus Christus* might be a valuable resource for delving more deeply into Vatican II’s vision of the Sacramento unity of the church.

For this project, Baker’s work to convey Augustine’s allegorical aspects of scripture and the place of the church as unified with Christ adds to the discussion for a means of seeing the presence of God in the church now. Again, this project does not take a Catholic position for “the whole Christ.” The tradition of Kevin J. Vanhoozer and G. K. Beale is extended in the efforts of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

G. K. Beale, *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023).

⁶⁵ See the articles in the *totus Christus* symposium in *Pro Ecclesia*. J. David Moser, “Totus Christus: A Proposal for Protestant Christology and Ecclesiology,” *Pro Ecclesia* 29, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 3–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219891630>; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Hocus Totus: The Elusive Wholeness of Christ,” *Pro Ecclesia* 29, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 31–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219891610>; Michael Horton, “Affirming Moser’s Well-Qualified Totus Christus,” *Pro Ecclesia* 29, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 43–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219892188>; Michael Allen, “Totus Christus and Praying the Psalms,” *Pro Ecclesia* 29, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 45–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219891615>; J. David Moser, “Corpus Mysticum: A Response to Vanhoozer, Horton, and Allen,” *Pro Ecclesia* 29, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 53–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219891547>.

⁶⁶ Notably, Kevin J. Vanhoozer admits in his predominantly critical article on *totus Christus*, “I am not saying, then, that every use of *Totus Christus* necessarily leads to dogmatic disorder, only that its ambiguous reference may inadvertently produce such disorder” (32). Michael Horton concludes his paper, “I also share [J. David Moser’s] hopes that *Totus Christus*, the mystical union and related themes will receive the attention they have in our [Reformed] tradition in the past but seem somewhat to be too slightly contemplated today” (44).

understanding Christ's work in the Church as an ongoing manifestation of his *doing* and *teaching*.⁶⁷ G. K. Beale, in *Union with the Resurrected Christ*, writes:

... union with Christ entails a vital, living relationship with Christ, which some may call "mystical" union. "it is nothing less than a life-union, a union in life shared with Christ... a union in life with Christ, [which] is also Spiritual," because it is effected by the enlivening work of the Spirit in the Christian... There is no idea in this union of "Mixture of natures, only a personal union, like that of husband and wife (cf. Eph. 5:31-32)," which is a "mystery." Thus, this personal union does not entail a participation in Christ's human nature but includes participation in his identity, position, and history.⁶⁸

The impact of the Church's doing and teaching as the mysterious presence of God is at work in the Church is the means of Lived Narrative Apologetic's success and any persuasive power it has. The work of God, His word, the redemptive act of Jesus, and the heart-changing power of the Holy Spirit, along with the tenets of faith, lived out in actualization, extends the power of change to the heart of a seeker. God's union in the Church's witness also establishes the rejection of that faith in the obstinate and proud. It must be remembered that the effect of truth does not always end in the successful conversion of another; it may also conclude in the denial of the recipient.⁶⁹ Additionally, receiving the word does not necessarily mean accepting

⁶⁷ There seems to be some potential here in the context of this apologetic model to allow for "the whole Christ" doctrine to be enjoyed within the tradition. Vanhoozer may have underestimated that potential though his findings are accepted and warranted in most cases.

⁶⁸ G. K. Beale, *Union with The Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2023), 7.

Beale here adds to his meaning, "Another aspect of union with Christ has been recently proposed by Kevin Vanhoozer. He says that when believers come into union with Christ, they 'commune' with him—that is, come to 'communicate intimately with him. ... To be in Christ is to commune with Christ and other communicants in the commune that *is* Christ Jesus'" ("From 'Blessed in Christ' to 'Being in Christ,'" 28). "Commune," Vanhoozer thinks, is a good term that includes "the 'doing' of participation and the 'being' of union" ("From 'Blessed in Christ' to 'Being in Christ,'" 28).

⁶⁹ See the earlier point with Keener, who argues that the Holy Spirit's convicting power draws one to desperation or to anger within the space of seeing the offense of sin or an inconsistent worldview.

and obeying. It may be that one accepts and denies it as the free moral choice of every individual made in the image of God.⁷⁰

Third, in what ways can the presence of God accomplish this mission, this fifth act agenda?

The presence of God accomplishes His mission with God's involvement in the apologetic witness of the Church. Lived Narrative Apologetics' success is in the awareness of a disciple (that makes up the Church) who knows they are in the story of God, taking their place in that narrative. As a result, their life has an apologetic and prophetic element to it. Because one's life is a story that affects change in the lives of others, when the Church lives aware that it is in the narrative of God and they are the narrative of God made known to the world, it (the Church) has re-storying capability. This renarratizing capability is the apology to a reading/watching world.

The Lived Narrative is the space where the Church joins God as witnesses in the witnessing work of the Holy Spirit in critiquing, challenging, clarifying, convincing, and compelling others of its superiority, subsequently inviting them to step into the story to realize the best version of their existence.

In his book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Leslie Newbiggin offers insight into how the Church accomplishes its mission in this Act Five agenda. In his chapter entitled, "The Logic of Mission," he writes:

The Church is not so much the agent of the mission as the locus of the mission. It is God who acts in the power of his Spirit, doing mighty works, creating signs of a new age, working secretly in the hearts of men and women to draw them to Christ. When they are so drawn, they become part of a community which claims no masterful control of history, but continues to bear witness to the real meaning and goal of history by which a life which—in Paul's words—by always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus

⁷⁰ See Acts 7 in contrast with Acts 26.

becomes the place where the risen life of Jesus is made available for others (2 Corinthians 4:10).⁷¹

Newbigin is correct in his take that the mysterious work of God in the Church is realized as the trinitarian presence of God in the narrative lived by the storytellers who actualize it, with the help of the Spirit, to do so.⁷² Those who join Jesus Christ as His bride and body become the place where the Spirit speaks and acts.⁷³ The presence of God in the Church argues for the Church and its disciples' ability to successfully answer a watching world with a persuasive plausibility structure to move one from their current narrative of existence to the story of God.

To this point, this chapter has considered the mysterious presence of God in the Church from its biblical grounding in Acts 2 and a summation of additional chapters, a brief interaction with “the whole Christ” doctrine and its application with Lived Narrative Apologetics, answering three seminal questions considering that doctrine's application, along with God's work in the Church. What follows is how Lived Narrative Apologetics functions as a worldview. This section will serve as a bridge to the final section of the chapter, which will consider a taxonomy used by Jesus and the Church, as especially illustrated in the life of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9.

This chapter aims to establish that Lived Narrative Apologetics is an effective model for the Church because of the presence of God in the Church. We contend that this model additionally grants worldview-shaping power for individuals of the Church and those the Church engages in her mission to live out the narrative of God, Act Five.

⁷¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 119.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 118.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 118.

LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS AS A WORLDVIEW

N. T. Wright contends that Jesus' fulfillment of the 'Renewal Program' was Act 4, and the Church is fulfilling the 5th act of God in continuation of God's renewal program.⁷⁴ Here, it is argued that Jesus was aware of the entire scheme, even as He lived out His part of the story. Wright would contend that this awareness is consistent in The Gospels, and this truth becomes significant as the book of Acts records the starting place for Act 5. The continuation of the renewal program through the Church has a beginning point, which is open-ended and at work, continuing even now.

The Gospels captured Jesus living with full awareness of The Greater Narrative while actualizing His messianic fulfillment in the narrative.⁷⁵ That Greater Narrative shaped His entire worldview. Therefore, Jesus knew His life was a story within a story.⁷⁶ Each time Jesus called a disciple to follow Him,⁷⁷ it was an appeal to enter the narrative He was (knowingly) living out. It was also to live from a transcendent worldview. The narrative of God would rescript the ones invited as they chose to follow Him, entering the story.⁷⁸ Luke records this

⁷⁴ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 320-323.

⁷⁵ N. T. Wright contends that Jesus' fulfillment of the Renewal program was Act 4. Here, it is argued that Jesus was aware of the entire scheme, even as he lived out his part of the story. Wright would contend that this awareness is consistent in The Gospels, and this truth becomes significant as the book of Acts allows for Act 5, the continuation of the renewal program through the church, to have an open-ended beginning point and at work, continuing even now.

⁷⁶ See Luke 24:44-49, John. 5; Mark. 8; Mathew 16.

⁷⁷ See Luke. 5:11, 27-28.

⁷⁸ See Luke 24:44-49. Note, "You are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:48 ESV) is a "hinge" text. Several observations can be made about the awareness of Jesus' living story. One, Luke allows the reader to observe Jesus connecting the scriptural implications/meaning of Old Testament literature or, as argued, the G.N. that he

lived narrative in his gospel and repeatedly illustrates the process of the disciples entering the story in The Book of Acts in each public discourse. Considering the intrusive nature of Lived Narrative Apologetics, the conversion narratives of Acts ought to be reconsidered as examples of the witness' imperative, taken into the actions of everyday life. The conversion accounts are an opportunity to see living witnesses that illustrate the power of the lived narrative by disciples in everyday life—everyday situations—in different settings. At each point, the apologetic realization of giving an answer is brought to bear, and the better answer is rendered, while inviting the watching world into the story lived before them (Acts 2:22-47; 3:17-25; 4:13-22; 5:17-42; 7:1-53; 8:1-4; 8:26-40; 9:10-17; 10:34-48; 13:15-52; 14:15-22; 16:25-40; 17:16-33; 18:5-11; 19:1-10; 17-20; 22-26; 28:17-30). This process illustrates the continuation of Jesus' doing and teaching through the Church. The followers of Jesus step into the narrative of God and live as witnesses that re-story others through their lived testimony, a story worth dying to tell.⁷⁹

lived under and was living out. N.T. Wright's taxonomy of Act 3 into Act 4 is fully realized, while Act 5 is on the horizon. However, Jesus here allows his disciples to peer into the realization that they have already been invited into the story and will be the continuation of that narrative's realization to the world. Two, it is equally important to note, concerning this witness invitation nuance, that Luke mentions the apostle's awareness of being in the story according to the choosing of Judas' replacement. Luke records, "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." Acts 1:21-22 ESV. The point is that they were clear on the fact that they were in a story that had a beginning point at which they entered, though it was already unfolding, an "act" in which those who would tell the story, being unfolded, would need to be clear on as they would be invited in to tell that story to another in the act (Act 5) that is now being lived out.

⁷⁹ What is of importance here is that Lived Narrative Apologetics is expressed by the church and through each disciple who shares in the awareness and actualizing of this methodology. See Acts 1:8; 8:1-4; 9:1-4. More will be said about the church's mysterious interconnectedness to Christ as a witness to the world. The disciples lived the narrative to the point of death, in complete replication of the story's primary storyteller, Jesus. This narrative/story takes on an incarnational continuation through the church as disciples live Jesus, as Jesus, and simultaneously teach Jesus to a watching world. This message is proclaimed by the lives they live as Jesus lives it through them.

The primary point of the story is that Jesus is God's solution to the human problem and God's argument.⁸⁰ The broadcasting of the gospel by the Church acknowledges that this story is a saving story, and no other story has the capacity to answer the most significant problems of a captivated world like the story of Jesus (Acts 4:12; Romans 1:16; Acts 2:22-37).⁸¹ Therefore, Lived Narrative Apologetics is both an argument and answer that, when applied, can captivate one's heart and persuade belief and behavior toward a comprehensive worldview that gives a more satisfying, robust response to human existence.

The power of the narrative and the potential for a better human life are brought together when the narrative of God is lived. In this way, Lived Narrative Apologetics illustrates the plausibility of this worldview (the watching world sees a tangible demonstration); thus, a touchable example: a life lived before a watching world (Acts 2:42-47).⁸² Such evidence makes the narrative a reasonable solution to life, found in the tenets of the faith, confirmed through disciples living out the narrative's doctrinal principle.⁸³ It follows that the early Church engaged a world captivated and was successful in re-storying

⁸⁰ See Acts 3:19-21.

⁸¹ See Acts 2:36-42; 3:18-26; 4:12; 13:30-39; 14:15; 16: 30-32; 17:1-3; 18:5 (Here, note the texts emphasize that Christ was Jesus. The goal of reasoning and persuading was to understand Jesus as Christ, the expected prophet, priest and King i.e., the Son of God.); 20:24.

⁸² To this point, Francis Schaefer would contend that the final apologetic, along with the rational logical defense and presentation, is what the world sees in the individual Christian and our corporate relationship together.

⁸³ The power of story to reimagine life is explicated by James K. A. Smith, in *Imagining the Kingdom*, 31.

those engrossed in underdeveloped worldview narratives. It follows that the potential is the same today.⁸⁴

In *Telling a Better Story*, Dr. Josh Chatraw explicates the Christian plight to evangelize.⁸⁵ He traces the success of strategies that appealed to unbelievers while in a culturally Christian context.⁸⁶ Chatraw describes the shift to a more secularized culture in Western culture, especially as it speaks to religious belief, writing, “Not only is God absent from the fabric of our most important institutions and cultural centers, but an array of competing news about life's most important questions are available to the public...”⁸⁷ Chatraw explains that the challenge of a secular world is to communicate the message of Christianity and the implications of that worldview. Chatraw limits the plausibility to proclamation of the narrative rather than the living out of that narrative. Toward this latter contrast, he says:

In order to meet the challenges of modern pluralism, we would do well to learn from our beginnings. The Church was born in a pluralistic society with little to no access to cultural power and was ridiculed when it was not just ignored. At the same time, however, we can't directly translate their approach to our context as if nothing has changed. Much has.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Chatraw, Josh. *Telling a Better Story* (p. 10). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. 6-12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

Chatraw seems to suggest that with the change, our approach does as well.⁸⁹ What if the change is not a call for change, but an inditement? What if the change is an opportunity to realize the power of living in the narrative to realize the same effect that was realized then? It is suggested here that “learning from our beginnings,” as Chatraw commends, is to replicate those beginnings. Learning how to help others see the splendor of God and His purposes by reimagining the world through the Christian story told as that narrative is lived, and its preaching becomes transcendent; the Church realizes Jesus is living, serving, and speaking through her.

Chatraw is correct in his critique but does not go far enough in applying the story. Lived Narrative Apologetics argues that reimagining the world occurs in reimagining apologetics. Suppose Jesus is God’s first and greatest apologetic argument (that is the contention here). In that case, He is story and apologetics reimagined and an answer to the cultural limitations of relevant plausibility structures as He transcendentally lives in story, as a story, and re-stories all other stories. It follows that the early Church and first disciples, in following Jesus, also lived in the story, as story, and had the capacity to re-story all other stories.

Note the contention. Lived Narrative Apologetics holds that Jesus, the first Christian apologist, knew that He lived in, through, by, and for a narrative (story) that re-stories. The Church must be aware they are continuing the same Lived Narrative Apologetic. Disciples are not only living out a prophetic word, but every time one’s story is told or one’s testimony is given, it is the continuation of the life and testimony of Jesus’ life and testimony (Luke

⁸⁹ This project’s aim disagrees with Chatraw here. The consideration is that the change is an opportunity to reimagine the significance of the novelty of Christianity through the narrative being manifest in an incarnational, more robust dynamic of word, thought, and deed as lived.

24:44-49; Acts 1:8).⁹⁰ It is a metanarrative act.⁹¹ Alister McGrath, in *Narrative Apologetics*, supports this notion in his text. He writes, :The Christian metanarrative as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien both rightly discerned, authorizes the use of narratives to communicate, express, and commend the core themes of the Christian faith.”⁹² Taken a step further, the lived use of narrative allows one’s life to enter the story and do what the story does with Christian faith in the life of a Jesus follower. McGrath continues this thinking, suggesting that narrative acts as both the medium and the message in Christian apologetics.⁹³

Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with McGrath, adding that the intersections of life allow for the narrative to be lived, expressing faith, and making plausible cases for belief. These lived expressions of faith are how seekers come to believe. The lived narrative makes the faith contained in the narrative visible and conceivable. Concerning this dynamic tangibility, Stanley Hauerwas argues that narrative has an orienting capacity that shares the Christian ethic, while shaping another toward its end: “We can only act within the world we

⁹⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Narrative Apologetics*, 15-20. Alister McGrath would liken this to a metanarrative application. Meta-“after,” “along with,” beyond, among, behind.

⁹¹ Alister E. McGrath. *Narrative Apologetics*, 15. McGrath writes “The Christian metanarrative provides a robust and reliable framework of meaning, which can be enriched or give enhanced granularity through interactive with other stories.” The argument made in this project is that Lived Narrative Apologetics is awareness and realization(actualizing) that a disciple is in story, living out story that has the capacity to re-story all others. Note McGrath agrees with this claim. He holds that the exchange of stories, places Lived Narrative in an especially unique place of plausibility the more it is lived, as it grows in granularity, the means of appreciating its relevance is realized.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 15. Here, McGrath supports the reality of lived narrative as a possibility.

see, and we can only see the world rightly by being trained to see. We do not come to see just by looking but by disciplined skills developed through initiation into a narrative.”⁹⁴

In like fashion, as the disciple offers testimony or tells the story of what Jesus has done in re-storying their lives, they are fulfilling God’s story for their life.⁹⁵ The life of the disciple becomes a prophetic story in that it fulfills the story of God. This lived narrative expression is an ongoing work of God that furthers and fulfills through everyday life. The lived narrative, then, is both actualizing the Greater Narrative in every aspect of a disciple’s life but becomes a manifestation of the life of Jesus, “word made flesh,” wisdom before humanity, a witness to the world in everything the “aware” disciple does.⁹⁶

Lived Narrative Apologetics is an apologetic practice that binds theology and evangelism as essential elements to establish fully functional disciples.⁹⁷ Lived Narrative Apologetics, as a robust expression of discipleship, provides the means for a disciple to take

⁹⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, “The Demands of a Truthful Story: Ethics and the Pastoral Task,” *Chicago Studies* 21, no. 1 (1982):59-71.

⁹⁵ Jesus called Saul into the story and made that calling into “the narrative to be lived” clear to Saul, an unbeliever, and Ananias, a believer. Jesus indicates the mission, the trials he would be under, and more. Paul would, in turn, live in such a way that his belief and behavior carried him boldly through the dynamics of life with absolute certainty of how things would unfold concerning him as well as what mattered most to him (Acts 20:34). Jesus told Paul that he would testify of the gospel that he had encountered (the story) and the gospel that he lived (his story). He was a missionary set on living that narrative as a life-changing act that had as a default intention the means and mission of re-storying all other stories (Acts 9; 22;26). Both Ananias and Paul understood their lives to be under the tension of a narrative while living out a narrative that would change other narratives. Paul implements the place of character as the message of life would marry the depiction and illustration of abundant life (Rom. 1:16; Jn.10:10).

⁹⁶ See Luke 2:52.

⁹⁷ See Acts 1:8. Michael Green clarifies the duality of evangelism and apologetics for disciples, especially as one considers the commission of Jesus. He notes that the word “Witness” was specially connected with first-hand testimony of those who had known the incarnate Jesus. But it also means to attest facts or assert truths. The coupling gains depth when Lived Narrative Apologetics is applied to disciples who witness Jesus in their lives, thus attesting to facts and truth in living and equally arguing for the validity of life under the rule of Jesus.

their place as “healing agents” in the world, “light springing into darkness.”⁹⁸ Lived Narrative Apologetics is palpable theology and a practical explanation of God, made manifest before the watching world. Lived Narrative Apologetics is a way of doing Christian theology, as it seeks to engage with current concerns in the world by confronting other worldview narratives and injecting God’s story.⁹⁹ Note that this “injection,” like the coming of Jesus, was/is intentional and mission-driven, intended to challenge one’s current life story while illustrating a better narrative before them, speaking that narrative to them and inviting them to become a part of it. To this point, as Jesus intrudes into the horizon of human existence, so does the Church through Lived Narrative Apologetics.

Luke-Acts demonstrates this methodology in at least three ways. *One*, Acts historically records several occasions that illustrate the story of God meeting a different worldview construct. In these occasions, the Church’s lived narrative engaged in a manner that challenged and offered clarification while inviting the watcher to try on the story lived before them for themselves (Acts 2; 6-7; 13; 17; 24-26). As previously mentioned, the Greater Narrative is God’s renewal program, but it is also the summation of human history and cogent explanation of how things came to be.

⁹⁸ See Mt. 2.

⁹⁹ The Works of Moltmann (1974, 1985, 1990).

Two, Lived Narrative Apologetics engages the watching world with answers to at least four worldview questions through the narrative/story told.¹⁰⁰

1. Who are we?
2. Where are we?
3. What is wrong?
4. What is the solution?

Consider the correlation of worldview as story and, therefore, functional in a manner that addresses the greatest issues and questions of the human plight. With that consideration in mind, N.T. Wright argues that a worldview functions through a fourfold process. Taken that Lived Narrative Apologetics functions from a worldview story capacity, it follows that the Greater Narrative that Lived Narrative Apologetics utilizes is the story that forms the Christian worldview. Holding this, Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Wright on several points that the Christian worldview engages the world theologically. The successful engagement of the Christian worldview through story is how Christian apologetics is reimagined and facilitates the means of captivating the captured, offering a story superior to the current secular narrative in which one lives. Lived Narrative Apologetics engages the surrounding, watching world by telling a story that coherently captures the current depiction of the world and human plight.

¹⁰⁰ Wright, *The New Testament and The People of God*, 132-33. Wright suggests these questions as fundamental for one's worldview. He notes that these four constitute a ground-plan of the mainline of traditional Christian worldview.

Three, Lived Narrative Apologetics engages the watching world by establishing a manner of life that corresponds to the story, indicating character in concert with the promise and principles of the story (1 Pt. 3:15-16; Acts 2:22-42; Acts 3). Here, it should be considered that the “Good News” is the promise of what is to come and what can be now. The “storyteller” is a healing agent in the world by modeling teaching through the narrative they live.¹⁰¹ God uses the storyteller to heal the world from incomplete, inadequate, and underdeveloped stories (Acts 2; 13; 22-28). “Christians are part of His (God’s) means of bringing healing to the world.”¹⁰² Lived Narrative Apologetics demonstrates the practice of story that advances a complete and competent argument of God that shapes belief and behavior through the comprehensive actualization of Christian living. Lived Narrative Apologetics is a platform of communication in regular human interaction that gives a tangible portrayal of the gospel narrative to a world currently captivated by a lesser story. Therefore, that imagination is kindled, plausibility is established, and beliefs and behaviors are changed, thereby embracing a superior worldview narrative and purpose of living. Lived Narrative Apologetics gives mission to the disciple and significance to one’s giftedness and natural ability as they now find their place in the “score” or “drama” of God and add sound to the harmony, beauty to the script, and value to the now.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Wright, *Scripture and The Authority of Scripture*, 133.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 131-141.

¹⁰³ The concept of “score” and “drama” is how N.T. Wright metaphorically explicates how the disciple takes their place in Act 5 of God’s renewal project. Wright further contends that this understanding is essential for

This project will now consider Luke's record of Jesus and Saul of Tarsus as a first apologetic encounter to illustrate the worldview-shaping potential of the Church as she engages the world around her. Acts 9 and supporting text from Acts will mainly be considered as this history illustrates a taxonomy for Lived Narrative Apologetics (briefly mentioned earlier), which the Church and Jesus with Saul use.

LIVED NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS BY THE CHRIST THROUGH THE CHURCH

Lived Narrative Apologetics puts forth that Jesus originates a model of apologetics and evangelism that is, in essence, His life as narrative, lived before the watching world. We argue that lived narrative actualization in the life and ministry of Jesus serves as a taxonomy to recognize the distinct practices of a first Christian apologetic methodology by Christ in and through the Church as recorded in Acts. The work of Jesus in The Greater Narrative of God indicates that He is more than the Word made flesh.¹⁰⁴ Scripture's story contends that Jesus is ushering into the world the next act of the story of God, which may conflict with and critique the current context. However, it is a story that has the means to challenge readers to try it on and live out its implications. In like fashion, the Church continues what Jesus began to *do* and *teach*

interpreting scripture. For Vanhoozer, the Drama of scripture is how the disciple lives in the wisdom of God. Lived Narrative Apologetics, and especially the narrative lived, is the authority of scripture governing the disciple's life, hence lived wisdom and the mission realized. This happens when the disciple accepts the invitation and steps into the calling of God to continue the story and re-story others through the disciple-making process. The ultimate realization of this ideal is both making known the good news, the narrative of God and its superiority as a way of life, as well as the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in re-storying seekers through conversion (an exchange in world views). These processes will be later developed by observing Jesus and Paul. This observation will serve as a case study for Lived Narrative Apologetics.

¹⁰⁴ See Jn. 1:14.

through her advancement of the narrative of God to the world. This section will further examine the “how” of Lived Narrative Apologetics. How does it accomplish what it does? How is it efficacious in the life of those who do not subscribe to the Christian worldview?

The answer, as will be argued, is that the work of God in the life of the Church supplies Lived Narrative Apologetics with the power to establish plausibility structures to consider the value and superiority of the Christian story.¹⁰⁵ Isaiah describes the intrinsic effectiveness of the Scripture, writing, “So My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.”¹⁰⁶ A correlation can be made with the Church as the “organ of God’s expression.”¹⁰⁷ God has sent it out to accomplish His work (Acts 1:1, 8). *When the Church and disciples within her live in awareness of this calling and story, the narrative of God, she cannot fail in the mission she is sent forth to accomplish.* This inability to fail in the mission is especially exemplified in the book Acts with the Saul of Tarsus narrative.

Luke’s narrative records Saul’s conversion from unwilling to willing, from involuntary to voluntary doer of God’s will.¹⁰⁸ Saul’s conversion and calling story is not in any doubt.¹⁰⁹ The practice of Lived Narrative Apologetics will now be considered by examining the interface of the

¹⁰⁵ This notion is in concert with the earlier points made under the worldview shaping capacity of Lived Narrative Apologetics from the engagement with N. T. Wright.

¹⁰⁶ *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version.* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2009), Isaiah 55:11.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 274.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall, *The Acts of The Apostles*, 167. Marshall notes, “He himself refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:8-; Galatians 1:12-17; Philippians 3:4-7; and 1 Timothy 1:12-16. These passages describe how Paul had been a persecutor for the church but had a vision of Jesus as a result of which he was called to be an apostle (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1) and summoned to preach to the Gentiles.”

Church, Jesus, and Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:1-31. Craig Keener comments that this account is so central for Luke that he repeats its substance two more times (22:5-21; 26:9-18).¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” “Who are You, Lord?” he said. “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting,” He replied. “But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”¹¹¹

There are several ways to describe the events recorded by Luke on the Damascus Road. Some have called it the ending of a persecution program.¹¹² Others have labeled it as the narrative that describes the campaign and ongoing repression against the believers in Jerusalem and how it was turned around due to the conversion of Saul.¹¹³ Craig Keener has summarized the presence of God at work in the Church, which offers the means to live His story before a critical world. That confrontation ultimately changes the narrative of another, inviting them into the Christian story to become a storyteller. Keener says, “In 9:1-9, Jesus’ glory, revealing his divine reality, physically blinds his spiritually blind persecutor, Saul. Realizing that he has been fighting the Lord, he claimed to be serving (5:39; 26:14) by persecuting the pious remnant with whole the Lord is identified, Saul repents and obeys.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Craig S. Keener, *Acts* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 275. Cf. also 9:21, 27. Variations in these accounts – such as who fell (9:4, 7; 26:14), who hear Jesus (9:7; 22:9), or which point of commission is emphasized (9:15-17; 22:21; 26:16-18)- fit oral recitation practices. Ancient historians focused on communicating the substance more than precise detail (cf. 1:3-11; Luke 24:36-53). The accounts are rhetorically appropriate, however, e.g., underlining traditional Judean ideals for one audience (22:3, 12) and elite Hellenistic ones for another (26:14).

¹¹¹ *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version*, Acts 9:1-6.

¹¹² Bock, *Acts*, 353.

¹¹³ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 180-182.

¹¹⁴ Keener, *Acts*, 274-275.

Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with Keener's summation of the narrative. It would extend its significance to suggest that God is at work in the apologetic process, as the Church lives God's narrative, that life becomes God's answer and defense. The mysterious union of Christ in the Church is especially pronounced in the book of Acts.¹¹⁵

The book of Acts records providential encounters of the Church and its disciples, often meeting persons with a different worldview that would subsequently become Christian.¹¹⁶ There are occasions in Acts 8, Acts 9, Acts 10, and others where the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Jesus seemingly set the stage for encounters with people who would subsequently leave one narrative and embrace another narrative.¹¹⁷ The history of Acts describes God as providentially involved in external matters, preparing the heart of individuals seeking God. For example, in Acts 8, the Ethiopian Eunuch was seeking God, as indicated by the fact that he went to Jerusalem to worship (8:27), read scripture (8:28), and wanted explanation (8:31). Also, in Acts 10, Cornelius and his household sought God, as indicated by the fact he was called "God-fearing" (10:22), he listened to the direction of the Holy Spirit (10:23), assembled an audience of his relatives and close friends (10:24), and wanted to know all that was commanded by the Lord (10:33).

These two examples illustrate a principle of the success of an apologetic practice that God utilizes. God looks for people who are looking for Him (John 4:24). This is also the case with Saul, yet often not noticed at first glance. In between Luke's narrative of the Ethiopian and

¹¹⁵ At times, this project uses the word God in a general sense to suggest that the triune persons of the Godhead are intended (what is meant). God the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit are equally active and even mysteriously collaborating within the church for the kingdom's agenda. The book of Acts often interchanges their presence but respectfully maintains the agenda of 1:8 throughout the narrative.

¹¹⁶ See Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16, 18.

¹¹⁷ This was discussed earlier in the chapter.

Cornelius is the story of Saul (Acts 8-10). Keener mentions that Luke seems to place stories in trilogies that have similar effects (cf. Luke 15:1-32).¹¹⁸ Saul was also a seeker, though not as apparent because of his Judaizer worldview practice. N. T. Wright, in his book *Paul*, explains that certain cultural and historical elements must be appreciated to explain the encounter with Saul, who would become Paul. Wright establishes Saul's background and his mentality during the time of his conversion, noting the following:

When Saul encountered the news about Jesus, his mind was not a blank slate. He had been going full tilt in the opposite direction. More than once he reminds his readers that he had been brought up in a school of Jewish thought that adhered strictly to the ancestral traditions. As a young man, Saul of Tarsus had become a leading light in this movement, the aim of whose members was to urge their fellow Jews into more radical obedience to the ancient codes and to discourage them from any deviations by all means possible, up to and including violence. Why did all that change? What exactly happened on the road to Damascus?¹¹⁹

Here, Wright offers the significance of Saul as a follower of God. He was a fierce follower and seeker of God in his ancestral tradition. Wright continues,

Paul talks about “advancing in Judaism beyond any of his age,” the word “Judaism” refers, not to a “religion,” but to an activity: the zealous propagation and defense of the ancestral way of life. From the point of view of Saul of Tarsus, the first followers of Jesus of Nazareth were a prime example of the deviant behavior that had to be eradicated if Israel's God was to be honored. Saul of Tarsus was therefore “zealous” (his term, indicating actual violence, not just strong emotion) in persecuting these people.¹²⁰

Wright's insights support the reality that Saul was an aggressive seeker and defender of his faith. This mentality would carry over to his conversion and perhaps establish insight into

¹¹⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 272-274.

¹¹⁹ Wright, N. T., *Paul* (p. 2). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

¹²⁰ Wright, N. T., *Paul*, 3-4. He continues, “That is what he meant by Ioudaïsmos. Everything possible had to be done to stamp out a movement that would impede the true purposes of the One God of Israel, whose divine plans Saul and his friends believed were at last on the verge of a glorious fulfillment—until, on the Damascus Road, Saul came to believe that these plans had indeed been gloriously fulfilled, but in a way, he had never imagined.”

why God would call him into the narrative. It also contributes to how Saul would take his place in the continuation of the work of Jesus. The conversion of Saul is the most distinct illustration of what Christian apologetics does. Christian apologetics removes the debris or things blocking one from clearly seeing Christ and invites one into the story of Christ; it is most powerfully illustrated in the encounter with Saul. The aim is to demonstrate the significance of Lived Narrative Apologetics in the conversion of Saul. Alister McGrath holds that the more aware the Church is of her meaning, the more poignant her apologetic will be. The ability to know the story you are in and tell that story offers the means of practicing the negative (being able to handle objections to Christianity)¹²¹ and positive apologetics to ensure ownership of one's place in the story of God.¹²²

This project contends that it is an apologetic practice that has the means of (re)narrating an individual. This is an apologetic model that relationally addresses a conflicting life narrative with the intent one will recognize the deficiencies in one narrative and try on another, the Christian story. Such is the case with Saul in Acts. Luke's historical work in Acts captures Saul of Tarsus in one narrative. As God's narrative is lived among Saul, Christ joins the Church in challenging Saul's story, ultimately offering a better story to live.

What follows is a distinct study of how Lived Narrative Apologetics works by considering the life and conversion of Saul. *The aim is to acknowledge that Saul was living in one narrative and, by several interactions with God through the Church, a case was made, that it was plausible for him to see God better and accept the invitation into the narrative of God.*

¹²¹ Ibid., 4.

¹²² This point was quoted in the earlier chapter under an overview of Christian apologetic with more context to McGrath's discussion.

Was Saul Living a Different Narrative?

N. T. Wright, in *Paul*, helps appreciate the worldview and narrative Saul lived from. From Paul's personal testimony, one can appreciate his erudite understanding of the Scriptures, which motivated him to live with an expectation of the freedom God would give Israel. Wright notes, "The great story was the ancient freedom story, the Passover narrative, but with a new twist. The One God had liberated his people from slavery in Egypt, and he would do the same thing again. But they weren't in Egypt now. Their slavery, in Saul's day, was more complicated."¹²³ Wright explains that this story and its tension between exile and the need for deliverance shaped Saul's life with a longing and hope for God to restore the whole world.¹²⁴ The prophets promises, and the history of the Old Testament Scriptures framed the narrative Saul lived within, which further grounded an "ancient hope" for the Jews. Wright summarizes this framework.

That was the ancient hope, cherished not only by Saul of Tarsus but by thousands of his fellow Jews... But they were mostly aware, through scripture and liturgy, of the ancient divine promises and of the tension between those promises and the present realities... That is the great story in which Saul and his contemporaries were living. That is the narrative they had in their heads and their hearts. That story gave shape and energy, in a thousand different ways, to their aspirations and motivations.¹²⁵

As Acts records Saul's presence, it includes a narrative of hope that Wright helps conceptualize from the Jewish and early Christian world: "Hope could be, and often was, a dogged and deliberate choice when the world seemed dark. It depended not on a feeling about

¹²³ Wright, *Paul*, 45.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

the way things were or the way they were moving, but on faith, faith in the One God.”¹²⁶ It was not how Saul felt; rather, it was a virtue that shaped his existence and was practiced in life. While some have depicted Saul as being a ferocious animal who heartlessly persecuted the Church, he may better be appreciated as a hopeful advocate of the renewal of Israel by the One God.¹²⁷ Saul was, in this reframe a seeker.

Wright’s description of Saul’s cultural and historical background, described in the chapter entitled, “Damascus,” is helpful in seeing that Saul’s manner in Acts is appropriate for who desires to know “The One God.”¹²⁸ Wright’s work tempers a potentially narrow representation of Saul. In some ways, Saul was an apologist for the Hope of Israel. He contended as a Judaizer for its practices, and the religion was the centerpiece of his culture and life. On this Damascus Road, he would find a paradox of living for this hope while wondering why those he persecuted maintained their hope. It seems that Saul used the persecution of the saints to determine if they had hope worth dying for, as was his meaning.¹²⁹ He testified later that “as I punished them (those of the way) often in synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme...”¹³⁰ it

¹²⁶ Ibid., 45.

¹²⁷ Most commentaries on Acts limit the scope of Paul’s motivation to the word studies treating the ferocity of his actions in persecuting the church. The aim in this section is to offer a basis for that passion and give light to what may otherwise be missed. The work of N. T. Wright is helpful in unpacking the motivation and mentality of Paul. Other works have been considered, but Wright’s work, *Paul*, is exceptional.

¹²⁸ Wright, *Paul*, 41-60.

¹²⁹ Wright, *Paul*, 45. Wright explains that this hope was grounded in the Scriptures, which, was true, if lived. “The scriptures, not least the Psalms, had made it clear that this God could be trusted to sort things out in the end, to be true to his promises, to vindicate his people at last, even if it had to be on the other side of terrible suffering.”

¹³⁰ See Acts 26:11.

was in this furious defense and pursuit of truth, even in the persecution, that Paul would find the ‘why’ of the people of ‘The Way.’¹³¹

HOW DID GOD ENCOUNTER SAUL THROUGH THE CHURCH?

Luke, in Acts, shows the Church functioning in awareness, with the union of God, accomplishing His will through the Church in dynamic ways. The mysterious work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit establishes the space needed for Saul’s heart-change and consideration of the Gospel narrative and its subsequent calling on his life. To further demonstrate this process, consider the helpful work of John Stott in his commentary on *Acts*.

Stott explains that only one answer is possible if one asks what caused Saul’s conversion. What stands out from the narrative is the sovereign grace of God through Jesus Christ.¹³² In Stott’s explanation of Saul’s conversion narrative, he explains that several things should also be considered for the change Saul experienced.¹³³ Paul’s conversion was through the sovereign grace of God through Jesus Christ; however, a more significant question is how God unfolds that grace to change one from an unrelenting persecutor of the Church to a participant in its story. The process of God’s “sovereign grace is gradual grace and gentle grace. Gradually, and without violence...”¹³⁴ Stott comments that this process of God’s grace being extended to Saul was a matter of Jesus pricking Saul’s mind and conscience with his goads.¹³⁵ Stott builds on the

¹³¹ This will be further explained below.

¹³² Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 168.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 168-169.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

conversion narratives of Paul, but especially his testimony of his conversion, to argue the progressive grace that was extended to Saul.

Lived Narrative Apologetics agrees with what Stott comments as the progressive extension of grace but holds that Stott's metaphor can be extended. This project additionally contends that God through the Church exhibits the capacity of Lived Narrative Apologetics to make Christianity plausible to one who was a zealous Judaizer, wholly convinced that his worldview was true and of God (i.e., Saul of Tarsus). Stott's efforts metaphorically serve as signposts enabling one to see the proofs that God offers *in* and *through* individual disciples and the church. These several pieces of evidence pricked the conscience of Saul, culminating with Jesus as the final heart-changing piercing.¹³⁶

‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ Then I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord replied: ‘I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and of what I will reveal to you.’¹³⁷

Stott explains the “gradual grace of God” by developing the metaphor of “goads” mentioned by Paul in the recorded testimony of his conversion. “Kick against the goads”¹³⁸ (a goad prods for directing animals). Luke uses a widespread Greek proverb for the mad futility of opposing deity, most famous from Euripides’s *Bacchae* 794-795.¹³⁹ The proverb presents an

¹³⁶ Earlier, this chapter put forth that all conversion is ultimately a matter of God at work in the hearts of seekers. The point here does not deviate from that contention. Instead, it suggests that as the apologetic work of God is realized, God, through the church and its disciples, progressively removes scales from Saul's eyes so that his sight would allow him to clearly see God, Jesus, his word, and his work for the kingdom.

¹³⁷ The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version, Acts 26:14-16.

¹³⁸ Scholars cite Pindar *Pyth.* 2.94–95 (the earliest reference, with the singular); *frg.* Iambi adesp. 13 Diehl; Aeschylus *Prom.* 323–25; *Ag.* 1624; Julian *Ap. Or.* 8.246B (where it is a *παροιμία*, or “proverb”); in Latin, Terence *Phorm.* 1.2.27–28; Plaut. *Truc.* 4.741; cf. the divine goad against a temple robber in Quint. *Decl.* 325.9. BDAG also lists additional sources (including an inscription from Asia Minor published in 1887).

¹³⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 585.

aphorism that Paul applies to himself.¹⁴⁰ The implication is that Jesus was pursuing Saul, prodding and pricking him, which was hard (painful, even futile) for him to resist.¹⁴¹ The point of the proverb, fitting in this context, is to articulate the futility for a human to strive against fate or the will of a deity, precisely what Paul's hostility to the Christian movement is doing (cf. Acts 5:39).¹⁴²

Stott adds that the kicking is being done against the irresistible points presented to Saul from the lives of 'The Way' people, as well as several other points of interaction which pricked his conscience. However, to attribute Saul's conversion to God's initiative can easily be misunderstood and needs to be qualified in two ways, namely that the sovereign grace that captured Saul was neither sudden (in the sense that there had been no previous preparation) nor compulsive (in the sense that he needed to make no response).¹⁴³ This gradual move of the grace of God will be developed by what follows.

Again, note that Paul's use of "goads" will be utilized as markers to see the various points of interaction by God on the journey to faith through disciples and the Church. Each stop nudged Saul's conscience. These proofs, their prodding and goading of Saul the Judaizer, are

¹⁴⁰ Keener additionally observes It is likely the case that Paul may have learned this gnome from his tutelage with Gamaliel who Luke records using a similar proverb in Acts 5:39.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 171. There has been some debate on the use of this proverb and whether there is any significant evidence to support Luke's use of it as well as its meaning. The proverb was widely used and by no means limited to Euripides. Keener, Craig S.. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 4* (p. 414). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Scholars cite Pindar Pyth. 2.94–95 (the earliest reference, with the singular); frg. Iambi adesp. 13 Diehl; Aeschylus Prom. 323–25; Ag. 1624; Julian Ap. Or. 8.246B (where it is a *παροιμία*, or "proverb"); in Latin, Terence Phorm. 1.2.27–28; Plaut. Truc. 4.741; cf. the divine goad against a temple robber in Quint. Decl. 325.9. BDAG also lists additional sources (including an inscription from Asia Minor published in 1887).

¹⁴² Euripides. Keener, Craig S.. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 4* (p. 414). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴³ Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 171.

seen through the context of Acts and culminate with Jesus as a final heart-piercing change agent. We are using the proverb as a transitive verb, meaning, being, or relating to a relation with the property that if the relation holds between a first and second element, and between the second and third element, it holds between the first and third elements.¹⁴⁴ Acts records these goading points, in which God, through the Church, captivated Saul's conscience, defeating the unbelief, doubt, and skepticism, which was apparent in his campaign against Christianity. These noteworthy proofs or, goading points, develop a cumulative case for Christ, which demonstrates the "how" of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

The wedded efforts of God at work in the Church through ordinary disciples in ordinary (and sometimes extraordinary) means function as "goading," like apologetic arguments making God and His truth tangible by the Church. The church, then, is living the narrative of God before men, making a case for God. Let us consider these goad-like proofs that serve as an apologetic case for God lived through the Church before the reader, Saul of Tarsus.¹⁴⁵

The first goading proof is that Paul may have spent time interacting with Jesus. Just as the watching world would say of the apostles, "When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus..." (Acts 4:13 CSB). It is not unlikely that Saul's life also interacted with Jesus, as they likely had times of intersection in their dealings. Stott notes

¹⁴⁴ Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996).

¹⁴⁵ Note that these proofs are not in any particular order or sequence so as to make a case as steps. Rather, they are all likely "goading" points that affected the life of Saul which demonstrate that his conversion or re-narratizing was a matter of several aspects that included the appearance of Jesus in the church and on the road to Damascus.

that some categorically deny the possibility.¹⁴⁶ Quoting Donald Coggan, he affirms the possibility despite the opposition to this notion, saying,

I cannot be among their number. Why not? Because it is more than likely that they were contemporaries pretty close in age to one another. It is therefore probable that they both visited Jerusalem and the temple at the same time, in which case is it not possible, indeed highly likely, that the young teacher from Galilee and the younger pharisee from Tarsus would have looked into each other's eyes, and that Saul would have heard Jesus teach?¹⁴⁷

Stott continues in his commentary, saying, "Even if they did not meet, Saul will have heard reports of Jesus' teaching and miracles, character and claims, together with the persistent rumor from many witnesses that he had been raised from death and seen."¹⁴⁸

Stanley E. Porter, in *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought and Letters*,¹⁴⁹ offers several points to support the possibility of Saul's interaction with Jesus during His lifetime. From a

¹⁴⁶ Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 171.

¹⁴⁷ Coggan, 33-34. Additional support to this notion is found in the work of Stanley Porter. Stanley E. Porter. *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought and Letters* (Eerdmans, 2016), 33-38. _____. *When Paul Met Jesus: How an Idea Got Lost in History* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 171-172.

¹⁴⁹ Stanley E. Porter, *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought and Letters* (Eerdmans, 2016).

About the text...In this comprehensive introduction to the apostle Paul, Stanley Porter seriously considers the background and significant contours of Paul's thoughts and the unique contributions of each of his letters. Porter introduces the Pauline tradition and outlines the basics of Paul's life, the chronology of his ministry, and his several imprisonments. Porter then discusses the background to Paul's thought, examines some of the major themes of his writings, and treats issues concerning the Pauline epistles, such as pseudonymity and canon. Finally, Porter delves into all thirteen of Paul's letters individually, placing them within their historical contexts and examining critical issues relating to the content and interpretation of each letter. The result is a thorough, balanced treatment of one of the most influential figures in Christianity.

Stanley E. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus: How an Idea Got Lost in History* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Did Paul ever meet Jesus and hear him teach? A century ago, a curious assortment of scholars - William Ramsay, Johannes Weiss, and James Hope Moulton - thought he had. Since then, their idea has virtually disappeared from New Testament scholarship, to be revived in this monograph. *When Paul Met Jesus* is an exercise in biblical exegesis and intellectual history. After examining the positive arguments raised, the book considers the negative influence of Ferdinand Christian Baur, William Wrede, and Rudolf Bultmann on such an idea, as they drove a growing wedge between Jesus and Paul. In response, Stanley E. Porter analyzes three passages in the New Testament - Acts 9:1-9 and its parallels, 1 Corinthians 9:1, and 2 Corinthians 5:16 - to confirm that there is New

summary of his book, he notes the following four points toward the possibility. First, Jesus spent much of His time in Galilee but went to Jerusalem several times. Jesus also spent the last part of His messianic mission in the city. Porter concludes that given Paul also spent significant time in Jerusalem as a teen studying under Gamaliel, and Jesus was a well-known and controversial figure within Pharisaical circles, Paul likely knew of Jesus' presence in Jerusalem, even if he had not seen him personally. Due to Jesus' controversial ministry among Jews in the city, a zealous young rabbinical student like Saul very likely would have been quite interested in evaluating Jesus for himself, possibly on one or more occasions. Saul and Jesus were in the same place at the same time, so it is plausible that Saul would have been curious enough to go and see Jesus for himself.

Second, Porter believes that several of Saul's statements in Acts recounting his conversion imply a personal knowledge of Jesus based upon a prior encounter(s). When Paul is confronted by the Risen Jesus on the Damascus Road in Acts 9, in verses 24-26, Paul sees Jesus (Acts 9:27) and addresses Him as "Lord" before Jesus asks him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Jesus' question to Saul seems to imply a personal attack upon Jesus, not merely upon His people, as one would expect, given Paul's history of hunting down and arresting Christians (Acts 8:1-2). However, when Saul asks Jesus in return, "Who are you?" Porter contends, "Saul is not asking after the identity of the speaker—that he already apparently knows—but he wants to know how one gets from the person he once encountered to the person who has just addressed him."¹⁵⁰ Porter understands these questions and Jesus' reply to mean that

Testament evidence that Paul encountered Jesus. The implications of this discovery are then explored in important Pauline passages that draw Jesus and Paul back together again.

¹⁵⁰ Porter, *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought and Letters*, 35.

Saul had some prior knowledge of Jesus—perhaps even a conversation had occurred between the two at some point while Jesus was in Jerusalem.¹⁵¹

Third, Porter holds that in 1 Corinthians 9:1, Paul says as much, “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?” Paul does not speak of Jesus here only as “Lord”—which is typically the way Paul refers to the Risen Lord, but “the presumption is that if Paul writes ‘Jesus,’ he is referring to Jesus, the earthly figure”¹⁵²

Finally, Porter cites a more controversial passage, 2 Corinthians 5:16: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.” Porter argues that “despite the controversy and continuing confusion, I believe that a probable interpretation is that Paul had seen the physical Jesus but that a believer's new relationship with Christ is not based on knowing him in this physical way.”¹⁵³ To ground this argument, Porter offers an extended exegetical argument, as well as a preferred translation in support of his contention, concluding, “that time of knowing Christ is in the past, insofar as knowing him as a human is concerned for Paul, and what is important now is that, though we no longer know him as he was, we know him now in a new and spiritual way.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 35-36.

¹⁵² Ibid., 37. It seems that Porter’s point additionally adds to the likelihood of the criterion of one being chosen to apostleship here as well. In Acts 1, the replacement criterion for Judas included knowing or seeing Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. Given the other elements already argued by Porter, one wonders if Saul may have been in circulation among the hyperbolic “all came out to hear John” audience at Jesus’ baptism. And, if that is the case, he would have been among those who witnessed and wondered what these things meant.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.

This first goading proof is the possible doubts and curiosity that would have germinated at the life of Jesus among Saul of Tarsus. The narrative that Jesus lived would have been, in many ways, conflicting with Saul's. Jesus' claims and predictions of His death and resurrection, which were confused by the hearer but made publicly, would likely have resonated in the mind of the Judaizer, Saul. In his uncommon zeal, Saul may have lived with questions of why this Nazarene was allowed to move about unchecked.

A second goading proof may have been the creedal statements. Creeds were a popular means to pass along important information in a format friendly to memorization and retention.¹⁵⁵ Their content covered early beliefs in the Christian community. They served for learning faith and doctrine.¹⁵⁶ In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote one of the earliest and most important of these creedal statements (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). Many critical scholars hold that Paul received this information from Peter and James while visiting them years after his conversion. If this is the case, "Paul learned it within five years of Jesus' crucifixion and from the disciples themselves."¹⁵⁷

What is notable is how the creeds are dated. Gary R. Habermas and Michael Licona, in *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, offer several lines of insight to consider how these creeds would have been a goading-like influence on the conscience of Saul of Tarsus. In their note section, the authors discuss that Jesus' crucifixion has been dated at A.D. 30 by most scholars, who also date Paul's conversion to be between 31 and 33.¹⁵⁸ History records that Paul would

¹⁵⁵ Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publication, 2004), 52.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 52-52.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

have received the information about the creed following his visit with Peter and James in Jerusalem (Galatians 1: 18-19). Scholars believe Paul received the creed from Peter and James at this time.¹⁵⁹ However, another option is that he received it in Damascus at the time of his conversion (which places the original creed even earlier).¹⁶⁰ In either case, Paul would have been impacted by this information within two to five years after Jesus' crucifixion from the disciples themselves.¹⁶¹

The apostle Paul was impacted by the popular information shared among the Christian community, possibly before, during, and after his conversion. The Christian community's narrative was one that the apostle Paul deemed a trustworthy source, hence his inclusion of the creed and his writings.¹⁶² It is possible that the creed impacted his conscience before conversion, and it is undoubtedly the case that the creed shaped his understanding of the narrative he was invited into, following his conversion. Paul uses language to describe him as an "examiner or observer of Peter."¹⁶³ What topic was Paul interested in examining? The immediate context before and after this trip to Jerusalem indicates that Paul's subject was the nature of the gospel message (Galatians 1: 11-17; 2:1-10).

The goading of the creedal statement demonstrates that Paul was growing in awareness of the narrative of God. This new narrative was growing in the mind of Paul in a manner that

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 260-261.

¹⁶⁰ It may have been shared with him directly after his baptism and just before his preaching began. "Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus." *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ac 9:19.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 260-261.

¹⁶² See 1 Corinthians 15:3-5.

¹⁶³ Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* (Oxford, UK: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 18.

disrupted his current narrative while helping to establish his place into the narrative God was inviting him. This demonstrates how Paul was fully aware that he was exchanging one story for another, hence his passion to examine the story that stopped him on the way, even as he matured into the space of taking his place in the Christian story. The narrative Paul lived as a Christian grew by the information of the creed and may have been initially shaped through the information of the creed, as lived and communicated by the early church community.

A third goading proof may have been the witness of Stephen. Acts 6-7 records the charge against Stephen, his polemic, and subsequent martyrdom.¹⁶⁴ Saul's presence in this narrative is especially highlighted in what reads as a transition from Stephen's execution to greater persecution of the Church (Acts 7:58-8:1). Luke writes, "When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul."¹⁶⁵ Saul has a leading presence. Peterson comments, "The fact that the witnesses laid their clothes at Saul's feet (7:58 note) suggests that he was the acknowledged leader in the opposition to Stephen."¹⁶⁶ He not only stood watching the execution; he also consented to Stephen's death (8:1a).¹⁶⁷

How did Stephen's lived narrative affect the life of Saul? As earlier indicated, Bruce holds that the Spirit-filled community of believers, the Church, is an organ of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁸ Their testimony and lives are a witness under the direction of the divine witness, the Holy

¹⁶⁴ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 181.

¹⁶⁵ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 7:58.

¹⁶⁶ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 275.

¹⁶⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 280.

¹⁶⁸ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 113.

Spirit.¹⁶⁹Therefore, as the word that goes forth from God's mouth, "It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11), so also the witnesses that God sends out in their lives before a reading world. Their witness will not be empty. Stephen's witness influenced the conscience of Saul. It goaded him in a manner that Paul would later acknowledge (Acts 22:20). John B. Polhill, in his commentary on Acts, articulates the likely impact correctly.

Paul likely had a deeper involvement with the whole incident than appears in these brief references. He was himself a Greek-speaking Jew, a Cilician, who perhaps had argued with Stephen in the Hellenist synagogue in Jerusalem (6:9f.). We would like to know if he heard the speech. If he did, it would be eloquent testimony that Stephen's words did not fall only on deaf ears; for ultimately no one carried out more fully the implications of Stephen's words than did Paul. The incident of Stephen's martyrdom in any event surely had a profound effect as Paul himself later attested (Acts 22:20).¹⁷⁰

While testifying on behalf of Jesus, Paul offers insight into the narrative he lived before Jesus. This testimony allows one to understand his change better.

I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. ...I caused many believers there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. Many times, I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus. I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.¹⁷¹

Again, one of the persons he cast his vote against to condemn to death was Stephen (Acts 8:1).¹⁷² Bock comments, "Paul's repeated references to the plural 'them' show that many suffered

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, 210.

¹⁷¹ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Acts 26:9–11.

¹⁷² Marshall, *The Acts of The Apostles*, 393. Marshall comments... the statement implies that several Christians were put to death, although in fact only one case has been described, that of Stephen. There may have been other cases, but it is surprising that there is no mention of them.

such a fate and suggests that he and the Jewish leadership were breaking the law.”¹⁷³ Paul is forthcoming about where his heart was and the mindset he had to “get them to curse Jesus.” What did it do to his mind when these Jesus people did not abandon their narrative? Saul experienced the narrative that Stephen lived through his speaking and reasoning, “But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.”¹⁷⁴ Saul experienced how Stephen lived this narrative while being persecuted, “And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.”¹⁷⁵ Saul would have even seen the imperturbable final stand of Stephen as Luke records, “They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ Having said this, he fell asleep.”¹⁷⁶ Saul could not have easily disregarded the counterintuitive character of forgiveness in the face of deadly, antagonist actions.

Stephen’s Lived Narrative Apologetically presented great conflict. Saul, while interacting with Stephen, was among those that secretly instigated (6:11), those that stirred up the people (6:11), set up false witnesses (6:13), became enraged (7:54), stopped their ears (7:57), cast him out of the city and stoned him (7:58). Stephen lived a narrative that was read and received as one that challenged the reader’s current narrative. Stephen’s narrative was intriguing as it appraised the reader—Stott comments on how Stephen’s lived narrative creates tension for the reader, Saul.

...Saul could not suppress the witness of Stephen. There was something inexplicable about those Christians—something supernatural, something which spoke to the divine

¹⁷³ Bock, *Acts*, 715.

¹⁷⁴ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 6:10.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Acts 6:15.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Acts 7:59–60.

power of Jesus. The very fanaticism of Saul's persecution betrayed his growing inner uneasiness, 'because fanaticism is only found,' wrote Jung, 'in individuals who are compensating secret doubts.'¹⁷⁷

Saul's conception of hope "was, a dogged and deliberate choice when the world seemed dark. It depended not on a feeling about the way things were or the way they were moving, but on faith, faith in the One God."¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, that hope may have been directly challenged as it determined why Stephen had the hope he did. This martyrdom, then, is another goad to Saul's conscience.

A fourth goading proof may have been 'The Way' community. How Jesus identified with this community is reciprocated to some degree with how the community identified with their Lord as witnesses. Luke offers several points of consideration for The Way's goad-like interaction with Saul. He describes the group in different ways in his testimony, which again, as in the discussion with Stephen, offers insight into how he appreciates the impact of the followers.

'The Way' should not be taken in isolation or exclusive to Luke's dynamic description of the community not only in Acts 9 but throughout the record of Acts. However, "Haenchen (1987:319n2) discusses the various names given to Christians in Acts 9: disciples, those of the Way, saints, those who call on the name of the Lord, brothers, and witnesses. Each name points out distinct features of what being a believer means or entails."¹⁷⁹ Here, the descriptions add to

¹⁷⁷ Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 172. *Contributions to Analytic Psychology* by C. G. Jung (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1928), p. 257.

¹⁷⁸ Wright, *Paul*, 45.

¹⁷⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 356.

the ferocity that Saul had as a Judaizer to eradicate any other designation that would suggest that it is the “right path.”¹⁸⁰

This Christian group was called ‘The Way’ and indicates a peculiarity to their manner of living.¹⁸¹ Behind the term lies the concept of the way of the Lord/God as the way of salvation.¹⁸² Because it was connected to Jewish Christians, Saul would have taken this metaphor as castigation toward the narrative he lived and from that space, as Luke records, “Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord... so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”¹⁸³

The expression “breathing threats and murder” reflects Saul’s highly hostile attitude toward believers... expressing what he hopes will be the result of his arrests. Or, as he testifies in his defense, “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.”¹⁸⁴ Saul’s passion to persecute the Church is continued here as it was with Stephen. The same impact of the persecution is equally repeated on this goading proof. What was the reciprocal effect of doing many things hostile to the name of Jesus? *How did it strike Saul to lock up the saints in prison, persecute them tirelessly, try to force them to blaspheme, to be furiously enraged at them, and even chase them to foreign cities with*

¹⁸⁰ Keener, *Acts*, 276.

¹⁸¹ Marshall, *The Acts of The Apostles*, 168.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 168-169.

¹⁸³ Acts 9:1–2.

¹⁸⁴ Acts 22:4–5.

the only result being that they would not stop their witness? How would this phenomenon resonate in the mind of a Judaizer who rigorously lives hope and witnesses the Christian movement not losing hope? There is no evidence of anyone persecuted by Saul to have relented from their faith in Jesus. Paul's reference to his efforts to make the Christians blaspheme the name of Christ is well translated in the NIV—he “tried” to do so, but he did not likely succeed.¹⁸⁵ In his letter to the emperor Trajan of the early second century, the Roman governor Pliny told how it was impossible for him to force any “true” Christian to curse the name of Christ.¹⁸⁶

Saul would first experience the person of Jesus in the way the disciples lived. The martyrdom of Stephen and the many martyrs within The Way community, along with their unusual response in the similitude of the character of Christ, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!”¹⁸⁷ would likely have profoundly affected Saul's conscience. These “goads of Jesus” were moral and intellectual...a drawn-out process in which “the Hound of Heaven” had been pursuing him.¹⁸⁸ This repeated story may have been why Paul would describe these events as part of his testimony and conversion narrative while making his defense for God (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-32). Moreover, the proverb becomes more pronounced in Saul's mind and heart with each proof. As stated earlier, “Jesus was pursuing Saul, prodding and pricking him, which was ‘hard’ (painful, even futile) for him to resist.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ The imperfect tense (ἠνάγκαζον) could be translated “forced” but more likely is conative, “attempted to force.”

¹⁸⁶ Pliny the Younger, Epistles 10.96.5. From: John B. Polhill, *Acts, vol. 26, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 501.

¹⁸⁷ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 7:60.

¹⁸⁸ Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World*, 172.

¹⁸⁹ This sentence was used earlier in explaining the meaning of “goad.”

A fifth goading proof is the vision of Jesus, interpreted as Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Paul argues that the vision of Christ, which he interpreted as an appearance of the resurrected Jesus, was the central and all-important feature of his conversion experience (Gal. 1:12, 16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). He had seen the risen Christ.¹⁹⁰ Seeing Christ was a progressive display of the apologetic work of God in the Church through Christ. Jesus offers commentary on the spaces in which Paul had experienced his appearance while standing before him in the way. Luke records Jesus' interaction, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.¹⁹¹ Note, here, that Jesus indicates his union with the persecuted disciples and, as has been argued, demonstrates that with such, he has appeared through the Church to Paul in an impossible-to-deny manner. Hence, Paul's later commentary that these interactions cumulatively signify that "it is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14).

The appearance of Jesus should be appreciated in a culminating sense, as well as Him being the risen and exalted Lord. N.T. Wright offers helpful insight from his work in *Paul: A Biography*. Wright argues that the conversion of Paul should not be looked at flippantly or as it would be in some change of religion. Instead, the goading proofs that are making a case by God through the Church are at work to establish that Saul's current narrative is underdeveloped and the Christian story, which has been lived before Saul, prodding and provoking him, has warrant to be believed. In this Damascus moment, it was not an instant reveal but the space where the points meet a conscience-clarifying place of exchange. Wright explains.

¹⁹⁰ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 417.

¹⁹¹ *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Acts 9:4–5.

To understand the explosion (On the Road to Damascus)¹⁹² that resulted, we need history, we need theology, we need a strong sense of the inner tensions of the first-century Jewish world and the zealous propagators of Jewish culture. This moment shattered Saul's wildest dreams and, at the same split second, fulfilled them. This was—he saw it in that instant—the fulfillment of Israel's ancient scriptures, but also the utter denial of the way he had been reading them up to that point. God the Creator had raised Jesus from the dead, declaring not only that he really was Israel's Messiah, but that he had done what the One God had promised to do himself, in person. Saul had been absolutely right in his devotion to the One God, but absolutely wrong in his understanding of who that One God was and how his purposes would be fulfilled. He had been absolutely right in his devotion to Israel and the Torah, but absolutely wrong in his view of Israel's vocation and identity and even in the meaning of the Torah itself. His lifelong loyalty was utterly right, but utterly misdirected. He had a zeal for God, but had not understood what the One God was up to. Everything was now focused on the figure from whom there streamed a blinding light, the figure who now addressed Saul as a master addresses a slave, the figure he recognized as the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. Heaven and earth came together in this figure, and he was commanding Saul to acknowledge this fact and to reorient his entire life accordingly.¹⁹³

Saul's heart change took place by the work of God, through the Church, and principally by Jesus. Luke confirms that Saul emphasized he saw Jesus as the risen and glorified One (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:16). This was a total conversion of will, intellect, and emotion, which dictated the abiding purpose and direction of his life and activity.¹⁹⁴ This conversion was not compulsive, but contemplative. Wright describes that Paul's fasting and praying correlated to his Jewish manner of meditatively seeking understanding and direction from the One God.¹⁹⁵ This would give additional light on questions and answers that occurred with Jesus when He appeared to Saul. Stott comments that Jesus put to him a probing question, "Why do you persecute me?" Thus, He appealed to His reason and conscience to bring into His consciousness the folly and evil of what He was doing... And Saul was not so overwhelmed by the vision and voice as to be

¹⁹² Parenthetical statement added.

¹⁹³ Wright, *Paul*, 52-53.

¹⁹⁴ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 183.

¹⁹⁵ Wright, *Paul*, 48-51.

deprived of speech and unable to reply. No, he answered Christ's question with two counter-questions: first, "'Who are you, Lord?' (5) and secondly, 'What shall I do, Lord?' (22:10). His response was rational, conscientious, and free."¹⁹⁶ Saul is seen to embrace and grow into awareness of the narrative that has confronted him. History indicates that he examined the narrative (Galatians 1:11-17; 2:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Saul interpreted the appearance of Jesus as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which was the core of his message. Inconceivably one of the most distinct of his messages to the Jews, Paul argues the historical facts of the earliest creeds' content in a manner that would correlate to his own earlier narrational misunderstandings.

Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and others who worship God, listen! The news about this salvation has been sent to us. Those who live in Jerusalem and their leaders did not realize that Jesus was the Savior. They did not understand the words that the prophets wrote, which are read every Sabbath day. But they made them come true when they said Jesus was guilty. They could not find any real reason for Jesus to be put to death, but they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had done to him all that the Scriptures had said, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him up from the dead! After this, for many days, those who had gone with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem saw him. They are now his witnesses to the people. We tell you the Good News about the promise God made to our ancestors. God has made this promise come true for us, his children, by raising Jesus from the dead...¹⁹⁷

Here, Luke records Paul's teaching that Jesus bodily rose from the dead in fulfillment of prophecy. This turnaround in conviction comes out of the gradual grace of God in goading the conscience of Paul through the martyrdom of Stephen, the Church, and now the appearance of Jesus. Additionally, Jesus gives distinct commentary to the narrative that has been lived before Saul, primarily that the persecuted lived his story before the world (Acts 9:4; 26:14).

¹⁹⁶ Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 172-173.

¹⁹⁷ Acts 13:26-33.

Furthermore, this Lived Narrative Apologetic can be examined, which Paul is recorded to have done. Paul checked the appearance he experienced with the experiences of others. Gary R. Habermas, in his book *Resurrection of Jesus as History*, shares several points concerning Paul's desire to depict the story into which he is now invited accurately. Habermas notes that Paul made at least two trips to Jerusalem to counsel with apostolic leaders to ascertain the nature of the gospel he had been preaching.¹⁹⁸ Habermas also adds that Paul knew and approved the resurrection message of other apostles as he cited the creed (1 Cor. 15:3-ff), listed their names and other appearances, and stated that other apostles were preaching the same message he was regarding Jesus' resurrection.¹⁹⁹

Paul's writing would offer his commentary about these goading points that drew him to a space of embracing the narrative of the way Jesus lived before him through the Church. Paul said, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age..."²⁰⁰ Paul recognized how this God, through the Church, instructed him about who God is and how He has accomplished Israel's hope through Jesus (Acts 13). Paul also says that God "called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him

¹⁹⁸ Habermas, *Resurrection of Jesus as History*, 20.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁰⁰ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Tt 2:11-12.

among the Gentiles...”²⁰¹ and so inviting Paul to take his place in the narrative, to live the narrative he has been called into, which has the means of re-storying others.²⁰²

What observations can be made from this example of Lived Narrative Apologetics?

To this point, the section of the project has been aimed at exploring the “how” of Lived Narrative Apologetics. The major thrust is that God works through the Church to change another’s story for the story of God. Paul epitomizes an extreme case of how effective this apologetic methodology can be. Having looked at his life, using the metaphor of ‘goads,’ one is left to ask what the conclusion is with Paul having been nudged by the various proofs God gave through the Church, culminating in Jesus. There are at least seven observations that can be made.

First, Paul’s change illustrated the power of the story to change one’s worldview. *Second*, Paul’s narrative gives insight from his thinking and a historical depiction of the impact of the Church before a watching world, including the martyrdom of Stephen and the unrelenting faith of those persecuted who did not abandon their hope in the narrative they lived. *Third*, heart change is an exclusive move of God. The evidence provided by God through the Church can draw a person to Him or drive them to a place of defiance (i.e., Acts 7). *Fourth*, the narrative that impacts the life of the reader/seeker is also one that is grown into and able to be further

²⁰¹ Ibid., Gal. 1:15-16.

²⁰² A sixth goading point may have been the calling of Paul by Jesus. Acts nine and Acts twenty-six illustrate the unique aspect of being called, and the history of Acts would argue that that calling motivated Paul’s deep conviction in the meaning of the narrative of God as well as the truthfulness of the claims of Jesus through his record in Acts (See Acts 26-28). A seventh goading proof may have been his baptism as a final choice to exchange his current narrative and step into another (See Paul’s significance of baptism Romans 6:3-7; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 11:13; Titus 3:5). An eighth and final goading proof may have been in him learning more of the narrative and in turn teaches his new story to others (Acts 9:19; Galatians 1:18-2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Acts 13).

investigated, made aware of, and then subsequently actualized. *Fifth*, the community of the Church fosters the ability for one to deepen their involvement in the narrative of God and realize their place in His story (see the effort of Ananias, Barnabas, in contrast to the fearfulness of the Church). *Sixth*, one's growth in The Greater Narrative substantiates one's ability to live as a living apology with clarity for the story they are called to act out (in Acts 13, Paul demonstrates the connections of prophecy being fulfilled in Jesus). *Seventh*, the effect of being called into the story subsequently empowers and mobilizes the storyteller to call others into the story and, therefore, realize their place in the renewal project of God.

This project has maintained that lived narrative apologetics is the awareness (meaning that one knows) and realization (meaning that one is actively working in what they know) that one is living in the story of God. That story has the capacity to re-story another. The process by which this apologetic method effectively addresses one person's life narrative and rescripts it to another has been under consideration. This project has held that the Church lives the narrative of God, His renewal project. This includes each disciple that makes up the Church, and that lived narrative confronts other life narratives. In these intersections of living, the mysterious presence of God purposefully confronts and affects the conscience of the reader (a watching world), bringing to light the distinctions between what is seen in the Church and what the reader/watcher currently lives. Out of that confrontation, the watching world is given clarity (meaning explanation) regarding which worldview is superior and which story successfully addresses life. This acknowledgment occurs through the various points of critique as the narrative is lived before the reader, demonstrating hope and integrity, ultimately leading to deference. In that space of surrender, one is invited into the narrative to try on the Christian worldview, live it, and ultimately realize their place in God's story.

The final section of this project will offer a taxonomy for the Church to practically apply Lived Narrative Apologetics and principles that can be drawn from the apologetic example studied with Saul of Tarsus. As a prelude to the final section, this project maintains that through Lived Narrative Apologetics, the work of God through the Church can continue its mission of living a better story before the world that can re-story others as it actualizes four primary aspects that serve as an exemplar. As an apologetic practice, Lived Narrative Apologetics *critiques* the story lived by another as it lives the narrative of God. Also, Lived Narrative Apologetics *clarifies* the nature of God, the Scripture's wisdom, and the character-forming ways of discipleship. Additionally, Lived Narrative Apologetics *communicates* the will of God, His renewal plan for humanity, discipleship, and life in the narrative. Finally, Lived Narrative Apologetics *convicts* the reader of the truth and the implications of that truth, and its practice includes the work of God in the spaces of everyday life for the Holy Spirit to affect heart change.

CHAPTER 5

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This final chapter is purposed to offer what serves as a taxonomy for the church to practically apply Lived Narrative Apologetics along with some principles that can be drawn from the apologetic example studied with Saul of Tarsus and a general survey of Acts. This study maintains that from Lived Narrative Apologetics, the church can reproduce what is seen in the work of God through the church today by actualizing four primary features out of the research conclusions of Live Narrative Apologetics.

The lived narrative *critiques* the story lived by another as it lives the narrative of God. Lived Narrative Apologetics fosters awareness, which aids in clarifying the weakness in counternarratives. As one determines the weakness of lesser counternarratives, it presents a “goad” or proof that establishes points of wakefulness of the narrative's difference, fostering the question, “what is the reason for the hope within you?” (1 Pt. 3:15). As in the example of Paul, his testimony offers commentary on this interaction: “I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ Here, Marshall comments that Paul acknowledges that the narrative lived before him initially created immediate opposition.² This response was in light of his denial of the narrative’s claims that God raises the dead, in particular, Jesus.³ Paul’s disparity with the church’s narrative lived before him ultimately pointed to his incomplete narrative without Jesus as the resurrected Christ.

¹ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 26:9.

² Marshall, *Acts*, 392-393.

³ *Ibid.*, 392.

The lived narrative *clarifies* the nature of God, The Scripture’s wisdom, and the character-forming ways of discipleship. In his testimony, Paul explains that he could see God’s will in a space of physical blindness. He recounts, “Brother Saul, receive your sight! And at that very time, I looked up at him. And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.’”⁴ Paul, through the combined effort of Christ and the church (especially the ministry of Ananias,) is given clarification on the will of God. Bruce notes that with all that is implied—that Jesus of Nazareth, crucified by men, exalted by God, was Lord of all.⁵ This truth, impressed upon Paul’s conscience and realized in the presence of Jesus, is later featured in much of his writing (Gal. 1:12, 16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:1-8; 1 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 2:11-14). The deep and robust discipleship character of the church lived hope like Paul had not understood. As was earlier argued, his ability to conceptualize the radical teachings of Jesus was first witnessed through the witness of “The Way” community that lived the wisdom, love, otherness, and peace under trial, all which Paul’s writings would later reflect (1 Corinthians 13:1-8a; Philippians 2:1-5; 4:4-7). What Paul saw in the lives of the church and its Christ offered clarity on the One God he thought served with a clear conscience before Christ (Acts 22:3-5,19-20; 26:4-5, 9).

Additionally, Lived Narrative Apologetics *communicates* the will of God, His renewal plan for humanity, discipleship, and life in the narrative. Paul’s encounter with Christ was inclusive of instruction not only by what was witnessed in the character of those martyred, but also in the meaning of the narrative. This project argued that The Greater Narrative, out of which Lived Narrative Apologetics functions, allows for the disciple’s understanding of the story of

⁴ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 22:13–14.

⁵ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 418.

God. In the case of Paul, Acts records that he had occasion where the will of God was shared with him i.e., Ananias in Acts 9:17 or the disciples in Damascus, Acts 9:19. Also, Paul witnesses acceptance from Barnabas in Acts 9:27. Additionally, Paul had moments to research the story of God (i.e., Galatians 1:18-2:10). Furthermore, each of the conversion narratives concerning Paul highlight the meaning and significance of a right relationship with God. This new relationship is first seen in Paul's response of baptism (Acts 9:18; 22:15-16). Bruce adds that in being baptized, his invocation of Jesus as Lord would declare the dominant power in his life from henceforth.⁶ A second aspect of this relationship is God's unique calling for Paul. The narrative he would now live by invites him to take his place in the story in a prophetic manner (Acts 9:22; 10, 14-15; 26:16-18).

Finally, Lived Narrative Apologetics *convicts* the reader of the truth and implications of that truth, including its practice, including the work of God in the spaces of everyday life for the Holy Spirit to affect heart change. The work of God in the church is the heart-changing, heart-challenging architect of faith (Acts 16:14; 2:37; John 16:3-17; 15:26-27). This is evident in Paul's complete turnabout to live in the narrative he previously objected to. It is equally seen in the writings of Paul, who contends that God was the agent of grace at work on his life that affected a radical shift in belief and behavior (Gal 1:15; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Ephesians 2:1-10; Acts 13:38-41).

Acts illustrates the early church being disciples that lived in the narrative of God with the understanding of its redemptive intentions. This renewal project of God, couched in God's overall narrative, invites the disciple to take their place in the story, which both look back over

⁶ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 418. In his footnote here, Bruce further adds that his invocation of the name of Jesus mean that he was baptized "in the name" (or "with the name") of Jesus in the sense of 2:38; 10:48.

history and forward to the horizon to give meaning and significance now. This dualism inherently occurs as the narrative secures the disciple's worldview and strengthens their witness. The duality of The Gospel being historical while yet unfolding is matched only by its unique ability to grow faith and establish faith simultaneously. It grounds faith for the disciple while creating faith for the seeker (Romans 15:4; Romans 10:17). The book of Acts illustrates the progression of the gospel message to the world and, with it, the continuation of Jesus' method of apologetics through the church in the first century. Luke records, "Those who had been scattered went about preaching the word."⁷ They did so daily, from house to house, and they would not stop until the mission was realized (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 20:24).

In addition to the taxonomy from which Lived Narrative Apologetics works, certain principles complement its practice and grant the application to be more fully realized. The following are several of those principles to consider.

The Power of the Question

Engaging in the intersection of "question" seems to be a fundamental apologetic posture in the text of Acts. These various spaces present evidence for the times when the life lived is met with readers who recognize how evaluative clarification is taking place, facilitating the narratives' informing process toward one's conviction. This practice necessitates that life will be lived in a way that the readers of one's life question the "why" of the church's practice. The Apostle Peter writes, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO

⁷ *New American Standard Bible*, Acts 8:4.

NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.”⁸ The text implies that one’s life is so interwoven with the hope of the story that, as it is being read, it incites the reader to want more information about the hope they are seeing lived before them. These intersections of questions are the occasions in which the Lived Narrative Apologetic method meets open ears and hearts tuned toward the gospel narrative, which can better explain their story.

The Prolific Use of Questions

Where were the first disciples questioned? Luke-Acts indicates that questions were prolific throughout the text.

- 1) Acts 2:7, 12 “...What does this mean?”
- 2) Acts 2:37 “...Brethren, what shall we do?”
- 3) Acts 3:3 “...he *began* asking to receive alms.”
- 4) Acts 4:7 “...By what power, or in what name, have you done this?”
- 5) Acts 8:30 “...Do you understand what you are reading?”
- 6) Acts 9:5 “...Who are You, Lord?”
- 7) Acts 10:18 “...they were asking whether Simon...was staying there.”
- 8) Acts 16:30 “...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
- 9) Acts 17:23 “... 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' what you worship in ignorance...”
- 10) Acts 19:2 “...Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”⁹
- 11) Acts 22:16 “...Now why do you delay?”
- 12) Acts 26:8 “...Why is it considered incredible...if God does raise the dead?”

⁸ New American Standard Bible, 1 Peter 3:14–16.

⁹ Ibid., Acts 19:2.

- 13) Acts 26:28 “...In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”
 14) Acts 28:22 “...But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.”

The intersection of the question is a space for God to answer. Here, the observation is that Jesus and his disciples engaged in questions, but they did so in sensible spaces. The disciples practiced answering in everyday ordinary encounters with everyday ordinary people. Note that the implication is that the mission of redemption is always at work in the scheme of the work of God through the church. The lived story is fully displayed with character-shaping values that maximize the stage for impact, whether collective or personal.

The Pivot from Question to Practice

In the Acts record, Christ in the Church lives in their act of the narrative of God and places His wisdom before the world, engaging the reader or the watching world with the implications of how they live. By engaging the story, it is intended to be read as those occasions in which the narrative is lived (being read by the observer), and that reading presents a challenge to the onlooker’s current life story. For example, it was earlier argued that Saul’s life illustrates how the example of Stephen, the persecuted church, and the final appearance of Jesus may all have been narrational proofs that challenged the current lived narrative of Saul. Therefore, Saul, reading the narrative lived before him by the church, was challenged by the hope he saw, and that created plausibility to the hope he desired to have.

Such challenge and subsequent clarification create a platform of receptivity, though not always the case.¹⁰

THE PERSON-CENTERED PRINCIPLES OF LIVING NARRATIVE APOLOGETICS FROM ACTS

Because there is no “silver bullet,” the church today must be nimble in its thinking and willingness to engage in a world they are unfamiliar with. Throughout the book of Acts, the church moved to encounter the familiar and the unfamiliar yet consistently lived in the narrative that made sense of the human condition. This organic person-centered approach is how Lived Narrative Apologetics meets the diverse demands of competing stories. “The church is both a living apologetic appeal and the formative context out of which apologetic arguments are supported as plausible.”¹¹ The Person-Centered principles of Lived Narrative Apologetics from Acts bring into view the nuanced and dynamic, organic yet missional interaction of Christian apologetics and evangelism seamlessly and yet in a person-centered manner, practiced in the first century.

By person-centered, we mean that one approach is insufficient for every individual. There is no absolute approach that will entail sufficient complete effectiveness with every person. Nonetheless, one can live in the narrative nimbly and dynamically, which allows one to engage in different walks and illustrate the wisdom of God for living to those persons. In the gospels, Jesus illustrates the power of dynamic adaptability to the common and those of great status.¹² His disciples lived in the same adaptive manner (1 Corinthians 9:22-ff).

Several person-centered principles can be gleaned from the apologetics practiced in The Book of Acts by the disciples of Christ as recorded by Luke. Throughout The Book of Acts, one sees this practice being fostered in unique nuances in the community (i.e., Acts 2:1-47), different cultures (Acts 17:16-32), and the courts (Acts 22-26). From these various interactions, certain principles can be surmised. By principle, it is meant to be understood as a truth, value, or practice transcending time, person, or culture. When a principle is at work,

¹⁰ Consider the different response of those that joined Saul in stoning Stephen. It was additionally argued that the Holy Spirit’s conviction will move one toward reception or anger as in the case of Acts 7.

¹¹ Chatraw, Joshua D.; Allen, Mark D.. *Apologetics at the Cross* (p. 291). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹² See Luke 18:39-19:10; John 3; John 4; John 5; John 8.

it is operational regardless of the individuals utilizing it. Therefore, considering the historical text of Acts, several principles that undergird Lived Narrative Apologetics are present. Note the following observations.

First, as mentioned above, person-centeredness is always a priority. *Second*, Lived Narrative Apologetics includes the church knowing the culture it engages. The apostle Paul demonstrates person-centeredness by being aware of the persons to whom he chose to defend, clarify, persuade, and appeal to the gospel narrative. Paul took some time to observe the culture he engaged. Most commentators say, “Paul is disturbed by what he sees.”¹³ The point is that Paul does not ignorantly engage the world he would subsequently enter. Lived Narrative Apologetics contends that apologetics is not for winning souls; it establishes the ease of entry for the witness and work of the Holy Spirit’s efforts. *The redemptive plan of God to save humanity has never been through argumentation or evidence but by relationship.*

Third, person-centeredness looks for questions. Within the text, one notices the questions are bridges to the apologetic encounter. When we see the place of questions as doors to meet the person in the situation, we create a bridge from an area of ignorance to that of opportunity. The Book of Acts is filled with various narratives where individuals are in a setting of confusion as they observe “The Way,” which really, from theological lenses, is illustrative of the work of the Holy Spirit. In these encounters, clarification is often sought.

¹³ Bock, *Acts*, 560-561.

The questions then serve as bridges to defend, clarify, persuade, or appeal to the gospel narrative and living story manifested by the people who make up “The Way.”

In addition to person-centeredness, Acts offers several other principles that must be observed. *Fourth*, notice that Lived Narrative Apologetics appreciates the presence of God at work in the apologetic process. As noted earlier, the work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious but meaningful in heart transformation (Acts 1:8, 2:37;16:14). *Fifth*, in concert with God the Spirit, Acts features a distinct appreciation of Jesus as the anchoring evidentiary point of this apologetic. Luke records Christ as the transcendent cultural foundation for apologetic arguments. Christ additionally transcends cultural trappings. His presentation within arguments by the disciples is developed in a manner that clarifies prophecy (i.e., Acts 2:22-36; 7: 2-53;13:16-41) and satisfies inquiry (i.e., The Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8:30-35). Saul of Tarsus’ conversion narrative is perhaps one of the most profound pictures of Jesus’ foundational place in the church and its apologetic that leads to conviction (Acts 8:1-9:18).

Sixth, Acts demonstrates the historical place of proper rhetorical structure when making one’s defense (Acts 24-27). Alister McGrath noted earlier, “In the view of many scholars Paul followed with great skill the ‘rules of engagement’ laid down by Roman legal custom as he subjected Tertulia’s accusations to a point-by-point refutation.”¹⁴ These narratives of Paul and Roman courts establish a framework of how court defenses were used to practice

¹⁴ Alister E. McGrath, “Apologetics to the Romans,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998). Page 196. Exported from Logos Bible Software, 12:49 PM April 13, 2022.

apologetics. However, they also illustrate an ancient rhetorical means of logically developing one's argument and utilizing the understanding of culture. Epistemically, suppose one arrives at what one knows through rhetorical devices. In that case, the disciple has an advantage by understanding those rhetorical devices and using them towards their end. In the first century, the disciples of Christ stepped into that cultural insight in the court-like structure while maintaining a missional agenda of apologetics.

Seventh, Lived Narrative Apologetics illustrates that the methodology and practice of apologetics are as much for the disciple of Christ as they are for the recipient. The recipient is a beneficiary of understanding that leads to more plausible responses to the narrative lived before them. The apologist is the beneficiary of witnessing for Christ and living as the word of God before a world void and without that living oracle (2 Corinthians 3:2). Additionally, in living the principles of Lived Narrative Apologetics, this practice is actualized in a manner that ushers grace into every space that the church is realized. It is a better story, offering better outcomes for all it engages. After stepping into the narrative, Paul invites the watching world to do the same. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has suggested that Lived Narrative Apologetics is a first model of Christian apologetics that is witnessed in Christ through the church, as studied in Acts. The study, however, focused primarily on the case study of Paul and his encounter with the church. The mysterious union of Christ in the church was addressed to include the impact of Stephen and the persecuted church to highlight the likely impact of their actualized life in the narrative of God, challenging Paul's current narrative. Suppose such a model is fruitful in the explanation of Paul's conversion. In that case, it may also be fruitful for other narratives in the book Acts to lend themselves to such a view, perhaps including case studies in the gospels that seem to be especially likely to illustrate Jesus' life before the passion and its impact in the narrative He lived shaping counternarratives. Later writings may show additional replication of this Lived Narrative practice impacting the second-century church and early apologetic practices that currently do not include this focus. However, it is clear from this project that much can be realized from applying the practice of Lived Narrative Apologetics.

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