

Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary

NOETIC APOLOGETICS:  
A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH IN COMPARISON TO HISTORICAL APOLOGETIC  
METHODS

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## ABSTRACT

### NOETIC APOLOGETICS: A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH IN COMPARISON TO HISTORICAL APOLOGETIC METHODS

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Many people are intrigued by the fundamental questions of life. Questions of origin, moral, and purpose are just a few of these. Throughout the centuries, Christians have endeavored in the task of apologetics to give sound answers to these questions. The history of Christianity has shown that apologists have consistently answered objections and inquires about their religion and that many techniques have emerged to direct apologists in explaining their faith. However, there seems to be no unifying process for doing apologetics. This study examines the different apologetic methods and exposes their strong and weak points in order to develop more efficient response strategies. The research method for this thesis project uses qualitative grounded theory. The goal of this study is to evaluate the historical profile of past apologetic methods in order to provide knowledge, direction, and guidance for engaging in more effective apologetics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Abstract Length: 147 words.

## Dedication

First, the writer would like to give praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for saving him. Next, the writer would like to thank several persons for the completion of this work, with the first being the prayers, patience and love of the writer's wife, Damarys Hernandez. She has always provided great encouragement to the author. The author's children also deserve credit for lending their dad to pursue intellectual growth.

A special thanks to the entire Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary faculty who shaped the author's intellectual pursuits and commitment to the ministry. The author would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Elmer Towns, co-founder of Liberty University, who instructed the writer in various courses and Dr. Gary Habermas for so often providing the author with encouraging words.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Since the birth of Christianity, apologists were required to address issues with regards to their religion. Many of those same issues are still being addressed today, but a comprehensive range of new subjects is being answered or explained by apologists in an era where the objectivity of truth is being attacked. As the Church faces many struggles in the midst of its relevant position in the world, apologists shoulder much of the responsibility of helping give answers for the faith. They endeavor in this task by using a plethora of methods, and many of these methods have changed throughout the centuries, adapting as needs arose. As Dr. Elmer Towns explained, quoting an unknown author: “Methods are many, principles are few; methods may change, but principles never do.”<sup>1</sup> At its most fundamental level, there is a mission that all Christian apologists have, and it is to proclaim and be a faithful witness of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

With the advent of post-modernism the Church, once again, has had to defend and elucidate its metanarratives. Some have defined the postmodernist movement as “incredulity towards metanarratives.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the job of the apologist is to confront this lack of belief by providing coherent answers to defend the core elements of the Christian religion. Apologists must understand these cultural trends in order to be effective in their message. They must understand that there are many variables to address when proclaiming the Gospel. The correct

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Elmer Tows, "Class lecture." (lecture, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, School of Religion, Lynchburg, VA, June 23, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Green, Partial Lyrics from The Song, "*The Mission*."

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report of Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 48.

way to address these variables is to delineate a coherent apologetic methodology. There is a primary concern among many Christians, related to the steady decline in membership of "many western churches today."<sup>4</sup> This produces the need for introspection and evaluation on the apologetic/ evangelistic methodologies that are currently being used. There is a common thread among apologetics and evangelism because the task of the apologist is evangelistic in nature, and the task of the evangelist is apologetic in nature. Therefore, in order to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a proper and effective manner, one must understand this foundational notion.

Apologetics and evangelism will always go hand-in-hand. Salvation is a function of the proclamation of the Gospel. However, if the message is not explained in an understandable manner leading to acceptance, then no one would be saved. As the Bible says, "How shall they call on Him whom they have to believe? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher" (Romans 10:14, KJV).<sup>5</sup> That is, of course, not to ignore the work of the Holy Spirit in converting the lost by the preaching of the Gospel. In addition, this does not mean that apologetics is needed every time in order to evangelize the lost. Rather, apologetics is the tool that the Holy Spirit uses in a person to clear the way and make a path to a person's mind and heart. Therefore it is vitally important to see and understand that apologetics and preaching are not far apart.

Preaching and apologetics have a general goal in that they both attempt to persuade the unbeliever or to reinforce the faith of the believer. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience" (2 Corinthians 5:11). As Dr. Frame explains, "Preaching is apologetic because it

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<sup>4</sup> Robert James Kauffle, "How The Church Has Lost Its Vision: A Biblical Model To Regain Its Mission," (D.Min. diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary 2011), 2

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all biblical passages are in the King James Version Bible (China, D&H Brother's Industries).

aims at persuasion. Apologetics is preaching because it presents the gospel, aiming at conversion and sanctification.”<sup>6</sup> There are people who will believe without the need to elucidate the gospel.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there must be a unifying process that will aid the task of the apologist in doing evangelistic work.

There are books that explain different types of apologetic methods. However, by evaluating the various sources, the reader will discover that there is no agreement on a single particular process that could be used in the task of doing apologetics. Even a brief glance at history will show that every generation will have its own kind of pain and confusion, so the correct approach to deal with those issues and preach the Gospel requires apologists to be both methodical in approach and skillful in application.

The problems of the past are often not the problems of today. Nevertheless, the underlying fabric for presenting an apologetic is that the goal of the apologist must always be the same, meaning that the gospel must be presented, defended, and explained. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that ye should contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Therefore, there must be a common approach to the methods for doing apologetics. With this thesis would like to make a small contribution towards a better understanding of the taxonomy of apologetic methodology.

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<sup>6</sup> John M Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg: R&R Publishing, 1994), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Elmer Towns, "Evangelism" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*. eds., Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 207.

### Statement of the problem

The task for doing apologetics is a daunting one. It requires many hours of study and preparation. There are so many branches and issues that apologetics could address that more than a lifetime is needed to complete them. The apologist must be a philosopher, a pastor, an evangelist, and a prophet all at the same time.

In the ministry, apologists face challenges to the faith requiring a sound and coherent explanation to meet properly. The answers given to these challenges benefit from a method that helps structure adequate and appropriate explanations. The goal of this thesis is to come up with a unifying methodology for doing apologetics. Therefore, this work will survey the historical methodology of apologetics from the birth of the Church until contemporary times, and it will define the unifying thread among these methods in order to provide a theory for an effective merging of apologetic method(s).

### The Statement of Methodology

This thesis incorporates a qualitative grounded theory methodology. This was done in order to evaluate the information and develop a tool for the use of apologetics in the ministry. The thesis' end is to provide a basic tool for choosing an apologetic methodology, using different historical approaches to apologetics to focus and define a common thread amongst them. The study does a survey of apologetics and assigns or categorizes each under a contemporary method of apologetics as applied to historical apologists. Then a tool was developed to evaluate these historical apologists by analyzing the challenges they met in their time. This study will include the following sections:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Definition and Purpose of Apologetics

Chapter 3: Historical Survey of Apologetic Methods

Chapter 4: Evaluation of Apologetic Methods

Chapter 5: Noetic Approach to Apologetic Methods

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction to this thesis provides the emphasis necessary to understand the need and use of apologetics. The goal is to draw the reader closer to the terms and the need for this study. Several key aspects of this study are found in the introduction. The first one is the statement of the problem. This is where the author explains why this study is needed and what benefits the conclusion of this study will provide. Next, the statement of scope and limitations delineates the limits of the subject, explaining why the study is not conclusive or exhaustive. The theoretical basis connects the biblical exposition of apologetics and the historical evidences for doing so. The biblical basis provides evidences of the mandate to do apologetics for every believer. Finally, a review of selected literature is provided, with a survey of different literary sources that share some light on the apologetic methodologies within Christianity.

## Chapter 2: Definition and Purpose of Apologetics

Chapter Two will explain and provide the fundamental definition of apologetics. The approach taken is to state the definition of apologetics from different points of view. This will provide an overarching understanding of the word apologetics. The work will then continue with some of the common notions concerning apologetics and refutations to arguments rejecting apologetics. Although apologetics is a Biblical command, there are many in the church today that

affirm that it has no use in the ministry. Finally, this work will state and explain the main purpose for doing apologetics. In this last part, the focus is on the proclamation of the gospel by maintaining a high concept of the Word of God and the testimony of the apologist. There must be a reasonable exposition of the truths of Christianity, but this is closely related to the personal life and testimony of the apologist.

### Chapter 3: Historical Survey of Apologetic Methods

Chapter Three will present a historical account of apologetics beginning from the early pages of the Bible and of Christian history up to current times. The aim of this chapter is to present the reader with a broad understanding of historical evidence concerning Christians defending and presenting *apologia*. This exposition will be limited to Christianity only, and it will show the earliest attempts to do apologetics in biblical and Christian history. In this chapter, there is a common thread discerned among the early apologists. This chapter is important for the successful outcome of this work because, this thesis will assign a contemporary method (defined as such after the original *apologias* were created) to each example of apologetics. This will set the stage for the *Noetic Method tool* for doing apologetics in the 21st century,<sup>8</sup> developed by this thesis.

### Chapter 4: Evaluation of Different Apologetic Methods

Chapter Four will present inter-related evaluations among the various contemporary apologetics methods. The purpose of this chapter is to expose the strong and weak points of the different apologetic methods. By doing this, the author seeks to establish an easier process for selecting a particular methodology. Also, by defining the weak points of an apologetics system,

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<sup>8</sup> The Noetic Method tool of apologetics will be explained in further detail in the last chapter of this thesis.

this thesis can help reinforce the use of that method with a cumulative (multiple method) approach. Furthermore, the methods that help provide a stronger response to any challenge will be prioritized in the Noetic Method tool.

## Chapter 5: Noetic Approach for Apologetic Methods

Chapter Five will develop a tool for selecting the apologetic method(s) in order to provide a coherent and rational *apologia*. This approach will delineate a common thread among the plethora of apologetic methodologies, then it will draw a path where a person could be directed to the most effective apologetic methodology by taking into consideration several key factors. These are, but are not limited to, the type of subjects being asked, the epistemological framework of the inquirer or its noetic structure, and the most pertinent apologetic method in a given situation. The thesis concludes with a tool presented in a flowchart that helps select the best or most useful apologetic method(s).

### Statement of Scope and Limitations

This thesis' focus is to present a unifying tool for evaluating and selecting an apologetic method(s). It is not a work to produce a comprehensive account of all potential methods of apologetics. It is limited by the emergence of new antagonistic opinions against the Gospel or the Christian faith by those who oppose the truth. Nonetheless, as attacks to the gospel and against God are answered, the Christian apologist must be ready to defend its truths to these or any other new challenges. This is also not an exhaustive commentary on the varieties of apologetic methods throughout Christian history. While the author of this work has a preferred method for

doing apologetics, the author also recognizes that other methods have an objective and practical value for many people.

This study is directed to provide a taxonomical tool for doing an effective apologetic. Having this in mind, this study does not critique or criticize any of the contemporary apologetic methods. Instead, it is the purpose of this study to come up with a tool for properly directing the user in choosing an apologetic method or methods. In addition, this study is limited to the Christian faith alone. A study on the different world religions and their particular methodologies is outside of the scope of this work. In addition, there are aspects of the Christian apologetic method that are not relevant to other religions.

This project will attempt to validate the best method(s) for doing apologetics depending on the type of inquiry being presented against the apologist. The work presented in this thesis has not yet been tested for accuracy, but it could be used as a pilot study for future research in the area of apologetics methodology application. It is worth noting that the evaluation tool developed in this thesis offers a more Socratic methodology for doing apologetics. A Spanish speaker once said, "Socrates was not wise because he had the answers to everything, he just asked the right questions."<sup>9</sup> This is the thesis' main point: effective apologetic methods are those that not only ask the right questions, but also help develop the best answers. People have always had questions about the Christian faith. Apologetics was and is a way to serve these people by meeting their intellectual and emotional needs.

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<sup>9</sup> David Hormachea, *Como Vivir Casados sin ser Decepcionados*. (Video of Lecture, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL, February 12, 2012), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noo0OJwtges>

## The Theoretical Basis for the Project

It is clear from the pages of the Bible that every believer ought to be involved in the task of apologetics. Throughout the history of the Church, many people have considered the challenges presented against Christianity and presented coherent responses, providing a plausible case for the Christian faith. Nonetheless, there is a current trend to be an antagonist towards the whole idea of apologetics. This author understands and believes that the task of apologetics is not a suggestion, but a command. The apostle Peter clearly stated this when he wrote "Sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ in your hearts and be prepared to give an *apologia* for the hope that is in you, but do this with meekness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

The central question is not whether to do apologetics, because it appears evident that every Christian believer is commanded to do so in the Bible, but rather *how* to go about doing it? There are many methods for doing apologetics, and where some of these methods direct their attention to general revelation, others target the use of the intellectual faculties of men and the use of reason, some are based on the historical nature of Christianity, and still others focus on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit to validate the claims of the apologist. However, a person must stop and ask: does a single method of doing apologetics help the apologist in defending "the hope that lays within"? Is there a better method to do apologetics, if the classical or traditional methods are not enough or are inefficient in accomplishing the task? These and other questions will help lead the way in this study and provide a guide for this thesis.

## Biblical Basis

The following passages are the biblical and theoretical basis for the task of doing apologetics. These passages give an overview of the need for apologetics, but they are not an

exhaustive listing, nor are they intended to serve as the final argument for engaging in apologetics. However, they will guide the Bible student in asserting the call to do apologetics.

*The call to do apologetics in 1 Peter 3:15*

This is perhaps the clearest Bible verse in the New Testament that talks about apologetics. It presents the task of apologetics as a biblical command. In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle summons his audience to "be ready to give an answer," even in the midst of adversity. The Bible says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] and answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). However, to give an answer impels a person to know what he or she is talking about. There is particular information that needs to be conveyed concerning the word of God. The Bible states, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). It is a body of knowledge that has been entrusted to the saints. "But God be thanked, that ye were servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17).

In the context 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle explains that there is a way that the apologist must conduct the work of apologetics. The apostle uses similar phrases to those found in Isaiah 8:12b-13, indicating to be encouraged as the prophet was also encouraged under persecution. Isaiah 8:12b-13 states, "Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, And let Him be your fear." It seems that Peter was using the same idea as the exposition given by Jesus found in John 14:27 where it says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This is where the Lord explains that the believer does not have to be afraid. The apostle Peter goes on to explain that the apologist must "sanctify Christ as Lord" (1

Peter 3:15). Here he raises Jesus to the level equal with God. In this passage, Peter is explaining that the only one to fear is God and this God is Jesus.

The apologist must first sanctify the Lord God in his heart. There is a relational application to the work of the apologist. This means that in order to do apologetics the believer must have the Lord as the sovereign ruler of his life first and foremost. To sanctify or to revere God is to surrender to him and his will. Everything the apologist does must be in harmony to the will of the Lord. To "always be ready" implies that even in persecution or attacks, because of the faith, the apologist must be confident knowing that the message of God will not be compromised and most of all, will not return to him as void.<sup>10</sup> To "give an answer" is the basis of apologetics. These answers must be Biblical, logical, and coherent. The apologist's task is to clear the way or make a path so that the person asking is able to understand the claims made by Christians.

This passage found in Peter,

...[I]s called the apologetics mandate because in it Peter instructs believers to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. While the context of the passage is persecution of Christians, there is nothing in the text to suggest that "reasons for the hope within" should be given in such setting. Moreover, the Greek word translated as "reason" is *logos* and suggests a logical, carefully considered explanation.<sup>11</sup>

### *The urgency to do apologetics in Jude 3*

In the Bible, the book of Jude proclaims that Christians must contend earnestly for the faith. The Bible says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). Here a person can see that Jude

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<sup>10</sup> *Comentario Bíblico de William McDonald: Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento* [Believer's Bible Commentary]. Edited by Carlos T Knott, Translated by Neria Diez et al. 2 vols. (Barcelona: Editorial Clíé, 2004), 1061.

<sup>11</sup> James Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove: IVP. 2011), 39.

was very passionate in defending the faith. Jude, who was likely the brother of Jesus, also gives a very straightforward command to his brothers and sisters in the way to defend the faith against false teachers. The context of this letter will guide the reader to think that both Jude and 2 Peter were referring to very similar things.<sup>12</sup> There was a wave of false doctrines attacking the Truth that was once deposited by the true apostles. Jude sounds the alarm to all of his audience and exhorts them to defend the Faith. His fellow Christians were in great danger, and he warns them to remain in the doctrine that was once passed down to them.

It is necessary to stress that Jude was a good watchman of his flock. He explains in his letter that the body of doctrinal truth has already been given. Therefore, there was no other revelation that could be added or subtracted to what the saints already taught. This was apparent when in verse 4, Jude explains that men have infiltrated the minds of many new believers. Thus there was a need for Jude to alert them to contend earnestly for the faith.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there was a cultic/sectarian movement called the Gnostics. They were very active in those days attacking the Truth. It is with high probability that many of these men that Jude refers to were, in fact, from this deviant sect.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt that apologetics plays a major role in maintaining the purity of the message entrusted to Christians. The greatest threat to Christianity is and always has been false teaching. Any attack on Christianity that comes from the outside is usually transitory and not as damaging. However, the attacks from within the entrails of the body of Christ could be, and often times are, quite devastating. The New Testament is full of warnings about this same concept. Nevertheless, Jude is very succinct in his warning to the faith, for it was of the greatest

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Peter 2:1-3, 6, 10-18.

<sup>13</sup> McDonald, 1061.

<sup>14</sup> *Comentario Bíblico de Mathew Henry: Obra Completa Sin Abreviar*, trans. Francisco Lacueva. 13 vol. (Barcelona: Editorial Clíé, 1999), 1911.

importance in the eyes of Jude. "In referring to the faith, Jude is not speaking of a nebulous body of religious doctrines. Rather, the faith constitutes the Christian faith, the faith of the gospel, God's objective truth (i.e., everything pertaining to our common salvation)."<sup>15</sup>

*The command to refute falsehood and eliminate doubt in 2 Corinthians 10:5*

The apostle Paul in this passage is referring to the duty of believers to combat counterfeit suppositions. During Paul's time, many described a battlefield of ideas where a person was engaged in order to refute any false pretenses. The apostle even goes so far as to use a technical term related to a rhetorical or philosophical war. Paul is seen here as a soldier fighting against arguments that oppose the truth of the Gospel. In this letter, he is very clear in expressing the view that the believer must restrain any antagonist notion towards the truth of the Gospel and bring it captive to the lordship of Jesus Christ. In conclusion, this passage from a letter to the Corinthians explains that, as Christians, they are to eliminate doubts and pull down strongholds that stand against Christ and the truth of the Gospel.

*God invites us to reason with Him in Isaiah 1:18*

The prophet Isaiah advises his audience to reason with the claims he has made, not as obligation, but as an invitation. In the context of this passage, these words read like a parenthetical statement. They are addressed to a small remnant of God in the midst of judgment. God explains that they are to weigh the evidence of His mercies and reason accordingly. It is not a claim to credulity, but a call to investigate the claims. The main function of this verse is to make clear the notion that it is reasonable and intellectually honest to take the claims revealed about God and believe them.

*The duty to address false doctrines and ideas in Titus 1:9-11*

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<sup>15</sup> John McArthur, Jr. *2 Peter and Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 147.

In the letter to Titus, Paul exhorts this young pastor to be assertive when dealing with false doctrine. The words that the apostle Paul uses in these passages convey the idea that a person must have the capacity to challenge another to the point where error is identified and corrected. Paul expresses that this young pastor must conscientiously retain the good doctrine and that by this sound doctrine correct those who go astray. He must do this by refuting the objections and thus defend the truth.

*Jesus as well as Paul and other Christians were engaged in apologetics; Mathew 22, Acts 17; 18:24-28*

These verses are a clear survey on the approach that Jesus, Paul, and others had while doing apologetics. Therefore, they are an example for Christians to follow. In the first passage, Jesus interacts with the Pharisees by leading a conversation with the use of a more Socratic approach. He asked a question to counter-attack the assumptions of these religious leaders. By doing this, Jesus silenced them and justified His position. This is considered an apologetic approach that involves a "negative or defensive apologetic" approach.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Ronald Nash explains about these two approaches to apologetics that,

In negative apologetics, the apologist is playing defense. ["The proper task of negative apologetics is removing obstacles to belief"]. In positive apologetics, the apologist begins to play offense. It is one thing to show (or attempt to show) that assorted arguments against religious faith are weak or unsound; it is a rather different task to offer people reasons why they should believe. The latter is the task of positive apologetics.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Craig, William L, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Faith and Apologetics* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 23. For a better understanding of these two approaches or categories within Christian apologetics, Dr. Craig has written many articles on his website, [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org). He is one of the leading apologists defending the truths of Christianity within academia, as an international speaker and scholar in the field of philosophical apologetics.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 15.

On the other hand, Paul uses a more confrontational approach to apologetics. The apostle first explored the epistemological framework of his opponents, and then bridged the gap between Christianity and his opponents' idolatry by undermining their beliefs and vindicating Christianity. This is considered to be more of a positive approach of apologetics. In this approach, the apologists present positive evidence for the proofs of Christianity.

The idea of apologetics in the Bible is not limited to the exposure of unsound doctrines or defense of the faith alone, but it also demands the correction of Christians and the exposure of false teachers. Galatians 2:11-14 is an example of an apologetic correction where the Bible says, "Now then Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed..." This passage records the attempt by Paul to correct Peter because of a false notion relating to the Jews and gentiles.

A general misconception in this "post-Christian" era is that ideas share equal value and meaning. This is not so, for it would be like saying that emotions share equal value and meaning. In addition, modern culture seems to link the value of the idea with the value of the person. If an idea is presented, then to correct or rebuke the idea is deemed to present a direct personal attack on that person. The idea of correcting someone, is considered as being "unloving" and thus not a good testimony for anyone who is engaged in the task of doing apologetics. This is one of the reasons that apologetics has gained a negative reputation among Christians and non-Christians alike. While a person could be rebuked for not having a sound doctrine, this argument or perception of apologetics, as being negative, does not stand under a good Biblical exegesis, nor is the correction or challenge to an idea a personal matter.

Christian believers are authorized by the Word of God to "reproof, correct and instruct" as explained in 2 Timothy 3:16. They must do it according to Biblical principles. These

principles stipulate that the judgment must first measure or evaluate the one who is making the judgment and then pass just judgment on the other person. The idea of judgment here implies that a positive or offensive apologetic, as opposed to a defensive apologetic, is being practiced.

### Review of Selected Literature

The writer has looked extensively into the theme of apologetic methodology/taxonomy and found that this area of theology is very narrow compared to other topics. A survey of the literature confirms that there is a need for more resources that will classify the different apologetic methods. The paucity is probably because only a few authors have produced works on the taxonomy of apologetic methods, thus leaving the field without a framework to guide exploration. However, there are a small handful of sources that systematize the methods in a single volume. This project was developed out of these different sources. There are some works addressing this issue, but very limited in other languages besides English. The writer used published books, scholarly journals, internet sites, DVD conferences and the Holy Bible. The following is a compilation of the sources for this project.

#### *Books*

A key book to have in the methodology of apologetics is Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views On Apologetics*. Steve Cowan is an adjunct professor of philosophy at Ouachita Baptist University in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and bi-vocational pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Fayetteville. This is one of many theology books using the approach of addressing the topic at hand by interacting with the viewpoints and ideas of many different scholars. In this case, scholars present their view and peers evaluate the exposition by giving counter-arguments to the deponent.

Dr. Cowan's *Five Views on Apologetics*,<sup>18</sup> describes a counter-perspective approach to different apologetic views. The author allows the reader to compare and contrast different apologetic methods. This is an examination of the most common contemporary approaches to apologetics, known as Classical, Evidential, Reformed Epistemological, Cumulative Case, and Presuppositional approach. The book uses a wide range of apologists in their own fields, and presents an interaction among all the different points of view.

Another excellent source in the history of apologetics is, Bush, L. Russ. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800*. It is a collection of several readings that are essential to Christians. The author of this book presents the arguments of past apologists in order to provide an example for current apologists, presenting the content and methodology of these past apologists. Dr. Bush brings to modern light apologists such as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus and many others. This volume was indispensable for developing and completing this thesis, helping the author of this thesis crystallize the historical approach for doing apologetics and learn the idiosyncrasies of these apologists.

A book dealing with the methodology that Jesus used in apologetics is Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran's *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters*, published by Baker Books in 2009. Christian apologist Norman Geisler is cofounder and former dean of Southern Evangelical Seminary. He is a former professor of apologetics at Dallas Theological Seminary and is one of evangelicalism's most prolific writers. Furthermore, he occupied the position of dean of the Liberty Center for Christian Scholarship at Liberty University. He holds a Ph.D. from Loyola University and is considered one of the top Christian apologists of the 20th century. Patrick Zukeran is a research associate and a national and international speaker for Probe Ministries.

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<sup>18</sup> Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views On Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

Their book walks through the different times where the Lord confronted or answered his challengers. While Jesus never set down a formal apologetic methodology, the authors surveyed the different approaches that Jesus used in his apologetic presentations. The book analyzes the parables, dialogs, and discourses of the Lord in its apologetic context. In *The Apologetics of Jesus*, they write in order to engage the reader in the method that Jesus himself used in apologetics. This work is unique and challenging, as it aims to show the method and ideas used by the greatest apologist of all time, the Lord Jesus Christ. Since Jesus is God incarnate, it is rational to follow his methodology for doing apologetics. The book provides its readers with this information in a clear and accessible manner.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the seminal work in apologetics history is the Avery C. Dulles book, *A History of Apologetics*, published by Ignatius Press in 2005. Cardinal Avery Dulles, a Roman Catholic theologian, is the author of more than 700 articles and 22 books. He has served on the International Theological Commission and as a member of the United States Lutheran/Roman Catholic Coordinating Committee. He was the advisor to the Committee on Doctrine of the NCCB and is the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University.

Dulles' book is a historical survey on apologetics and is the most comprehensive volume in the history of apologetics that the author has been able to find.<sup>20</sup> The work surveys the apologetic roots from the early New Testament writers to the present apologists. In it, Dulles explains that Christian apologists criticized and drew from their intellectual surroundings to present an apologia for their faith, showing that methodologies were perforce rooted in their

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<sup>19</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Avery C. Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005),

times. The reader of this book will acquire the historical data and basis to understand the roots of Christian apologetics.

One of the earliest attempts to do a taxonomy of apologetic methods is the book by Bernard L. Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*, published by Baker House Publishers in 1961. Bernard Ramm was a Baptist theologian and apologist. His education included a B.A. from the University of Washington, a B.D. from the Eastern Baptist Seminary, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees earned at the University of Southern California. In 1943, he joined the faculty of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University, in La Mirada, California).

This book by Bernard Ramm is another seminal work in Christian apologetics taxonomy. The book divides the different apologetic methods into three categories: systems stressing subjective immediacy, systems stressing natural theology, and systems stressing revelation. He illustrates the categories by using three examples for each of the methods.<sup>21</sup> The reader benefits from this book greatly as Dr. Ramm attempts to group the apologetic method similarities into these categories, most often by discussing many biblical passages dealing with the knowledge of God. Dr. Ramm attempts to compile a taxonomy of several apologetics methods, and thanks to his efforts, many other theologians have followed in his footsteps.

Another work worth mentioning is the book by Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr. titled *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, published by IVP Books in 2006. Dr. Ken Boa is involved in his ministry of relational evangelism and discipleship, teaching, writing, and speaking. He holds a Ph.D. from New York University and a D.Phil. from the University of Oxford in England. He is the president of Reflections Ministries,

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<sup>21</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House: Literary Licensing, LLC, 1961).

an organization that seeks to encourage, teach and equip people to know Christ and follow him. Robert Bowman is the Executive Director of the Institute for Religious Research and is the author of six other books. He has taught apologetics for five years and at the time of the publishing of the book, was a Ph.D. candidate at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Their book is more along the lines of an introduction to apologetics, aiming to teach Christians the art of apologetics, with the authors explaining views and presenting a multi-faceted case for the Christian faith. The book engages the readers by developing more than intellectual discipline, for it also surveys the many apologetic methods used in the past and identifies four contemporary methods. The goal of the book is not only to provide an introduction to apologetics, but to contribute to the understanding of these methods so that the Christian apologist would be more effective in presenting the claims of his faith.<sup>22</sup>

A classical book in apologetics with a Presuppositional approach was written by John M. Frame, titled *Apologetics to the Glory of God: an Introduction*, published by P & R Publishing in 1994.

There are many who have tried to give an explanation about the relationship between reason and faith, primarily the use of the former in contrast to the existence of the latter. However, only Christian apologist John Frame really "clarifies the relationship between reason, proofs and evidences."<sup>23</sup> He explains in his book the three main kinds of apologetic, stating that apologetics is composed of proofs, a form of defense, and a form of offense. Apologetics as proof presents the rational basis for the faith. As a form of defense, apologetics answers the

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP, 2006), 1.

<sup>23</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: an Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1994).

objections from unbelievers, defending the faith. Finally, apologetics as a form of offense aims at exposing the irrational claims of unbeliever's presuppositions, in essence attacking untruths. In this manner, reason and reasoning are placed in the service of faith, rather than as an opposite. At the end of the book, Dr. Frame provides a short dialogue with a nonbeliever as an example of the methodology he presents.

One of the most prominent apologists of the 20th century is Norman L. Geisler. He is the author of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, published by Baker Book House in 1999. This is a comprehensive volume of information, derived from more than fifty years of research done by Dr. Geisler. This encyclopedia is a one-volume resource whose main purpose is to equip believers for Christian apologetics. This book incorporates many of the aspects or themes relating to apologetics, with more than eight hundred pages of information.

A good book for introducing the art of apologetics is Alister E. McGrath's *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith*, published by Baker Book House in 2011. Alister McGrath is the president of the Oxford center for Christian Apologetics, and professor of theology, ministry, and education at King's College, London. Dr. McGrath is a research Lecturer in Theology at the University of Oxford. He is also a research professor of Systematic Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, and was a professor of historical theology at Oxford University. Dr. McGrath has written several books on apologetics, with *Mere Apologetics* serving as an introduction to the topic. The book has a foundational "cliché" that explains the purpose of apologetics, stating that: "Apologetics aims to convert believers into thinkers, and thinkers into believers."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 2011), 11.

Another book he wrote was *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths: Building Bridges to Faith through Apologetics*, published by Zondervan in 1993. In this volume, Dr. McGrath presents arguments from a classical/rationalistic approach to apologetics. Since Dr. McGrath also holds a Ph.D. in microbiology, he is able to join science together with a deep commitment to the Christian faith. The book had its origins as a group of lectures given at Oxford University.

Another introductory book with a more philosophical approach was written by Dr. Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith*, published by Zondervan in 1998. Dr. Ronald Nash is a professor of philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. He was a former professor of philosophy at Western Kentucky University and has authored more than 25 books. This book by Dr. Nash, written as a guide for college level students, has two primary purposes. First, it brings the reader to an understanding of the relationship between apologetics, religion and philosophy. Second, it presents coherent answers to questions relating to those specific themes.

A classical apologist from the reformed wing is R.C. Sproul, who wrote *Defending your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics*, published by Crossway Books in 2003. R. C. Sproul is one of the most prominent Christian theologians of the Americas. He is the president and founder of *Ligonier Ministries* in Sanford, Florida. He is also the president of Reformation Bible College and co-pastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, FL. He has a nationally-syndicated radio program called *Renewing Your Mind*. *Defending your Faith* is a survey of the history and fundamental tenets of apologetics and presents as part of the development of *apologia*, the commonality between reason and scientific inquiry.

A.J. Hoover wrote *The Case for Christian Theism: An Introduction to Apologetics*, published by Baker Book House in 1976. The work is more of a handbook of Christian evidences and apologetics, as it is very informal, presenting a conversation between two persons, one an agnostic and the other a Christian. Dr. Hoover presents his evidence by using the nearly-common conversation between these two characters. He guides the reader throughout the book, presenting arguments for the validity of Christianity and the irrationality of the contrary viewpoint.

Peter Kreeft, and Ronald K. Tacelli coauthored the *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundred of Answers to Crucial Questions*, published by InterVarsity Press in 1994. Dr. Peter Kreeft is a professor of philosophy at Boston College and the author of many books related to the Christian faith. The co-author, Dr. Tacelli, is an associate professor of philosophy at Boston College and has also published many articles. This book presents a brief introduction to apologetics and it is more focused on answering claims than on being a volume about apologetics. However, the book displays a particular methodology for answering these questions that merits the reading of it.

Edward J. Carnell's *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, published by Eerdmans Printing Company in 1948, is one of the earliest books on the topic that this author has read. The late Dr. Carnell was an able Christian apologist. He graduated from Wheaton College, Westminster Theological Seminary, the Divinity School at Harvard University and the School of Theology at Boston University. He was also a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. The book presents the apologetic method with a classical approach based on explaining Christianity using the nature of truth, the definition of faith, and fundamental means of proof.

A vehement defender and former student of Cornelius Van Til, the late Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen wrote *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Edited by Robert R. Booth, it was published by Covenant Media Press in 1996. Dr. Bahnsen was one of the leading apologists of the twentieth century. He held a B.A. in philosophy from Westmont College and simultaneously earned the M.Div. and Th.M. degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary with a specialization in systematic theology. He pursued his Ph.D. in philosophy, specializing in epistemology, at the University of Southern California. He was the most prominent disciple of the late Dr. Cornelius Van Til. In this book, Dr. Bahnsen gives an explanation on the differences between the Classical method of apologetics and the Presuppositional method of apologetics, displaying not only the differences between the methods, but also the ways each method can support the other.

Philosopher James K. Beilby wrote *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It*, published by InterVarsity Press in 2011. Dr. Beilby is a Christian philosopher at Bethel University. He is an assistant professor of Biblical and theological studies, received his B.S. from Northwestern College, a Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Bethel Theological Seminary and he did his Ph.D. at Marquette University. Dr. Beilby is an intellectually forthright communicator who has tangled head-on with other well-known apologists in spirited debate. In his doctoral dissertation, Dr. Beilby tackled the issue of religious epistemology presented by Dr. Alvin Plantinga. In this book, Dr. Beilby gives a more foundational look at apologetics, an approach that was very useful for this thesis because it analyzes the nature and methods for doing apologetics.

Douglas Groothuis wrote *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, published by InterVarsity Press in 2011. Dr. Groothuis is part of the faculty of the Denver

Seminary. He is a professor of philosophy and a member of the Evangelical Theological Society. Dr. Groothuis received his Ph.D. and a B.S. from the University of Oregon, and an M.A. in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is a former professor of Seattle Pacific University, a visiting instructor in apologetics for Westminster Theological Seminary and has authored many books in the fields of theology and philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

In this book, Dr. Groothuis presents a good case for Christian apologetics. This work is very comprehensive, making it an excellent resource for the novice apologist. And although the information within the book is not new and can be easily found in other apologetics book, it augments many of the different perspectives about apologetic methodology. The author does present apologetic arguments from past apologists such as Anselm, and responds to the critiques offered against the Ontological argument for the existence of God.

A set of two volumes that deal with primary apologetics sources is by authors William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint. Titled *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: a Primary Source Reader*, it was published by Crossway Books in 2011. Dr. William Edgar received his D.Th. from the University of Geneva. He received a BA in music from Harvard and a M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary. He is professor of apologetics and coordinator of the apologetics department at Westminster Theological Seminary. He is also a former professor of apologetics at Faculté Libre de Théologie Reformée, Aix-en-Provence, France. Their book presents an anthology of apologetic texts, selected from many works of the early stages of Christianity, divided into two volumes. The first one delineates primary source documents from the early church, while the second focuses on works created during and after the Middle Ages.

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<sup>25</sup> Douglas Groothuis, "Dr. Douglas R. Groothuis," Denver Theological Seminary, March 1, 2012, <http://www.denverseminary.edu/about-us/president-faculty-staff-board/faculty/dr-douglas-r-groothuis/>.

This is not an apologetics book in the sense of methodology, but it is a primary source reader for *apologia*.

### *Videos*

#### *Apologetic Systems Course App 511*

This is an online seminary course that focuses on the variety of apologetic methods. Dr. Richard Howe, of Southern Evangelical Seminary, explains the similarities and differences of these methods. Nevertheless, he is distinctly biased in his preference among these systems. He favors the classical method and the class is centered on the notion that this method should be used as the principal apologetic approach for evangelism and the defense of Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

In reviewing some of the resources for this thesis, the author of this work has come to see that most of the literature found in mainstream Christianity does not have a unifying apologetic method. A true Christian apologetic method will have at its foundation the words of the Bible. There are many apologists that are in the trenches battling in the open forum of ideas. A tool, such as the author proposes in this work, will aid in the effectiveness of engaging in apologetics.

*"Defending Your Faith: An Overview of Classical Apologetics"* (Video). Lecture, Ligonier Ministries, Sanford, FL.

This is a course on classical apologetics given by Dr. R. C. Sproul. In it, he presents a historical and foundational approach to apologetics. The short video summarizes various themes including an introduction to apologetics and an explanation of the need for apologetics. There are some basic concepts in logic that are introduced for clarity, along with a historical survey of

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Howe, "Apologetic Systems Course AP 511", (DVD Lecture, Southern Evangelical Seminary, Matthews, NC, 2008).

apologetics. Dr. Sproul is an excellent teacher capable of presenting difficult concepts in a succinct, but easily-understood way.

*Foundations of Apologetics* is a video series produced by Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, based in Nacross, GA.

Dr. Ravi Zacharias is one of the most prominent speakers of the twentieth century. He is the president and founder of RZIM. He received his Master of Divinity from Trinity International University, in Deerfield, IL. He held the chair of Evangelism and Contemporary Thought at Alliance Theological Seminary. He has been honored by the conferring of a Doctor of Divinity title from Houghton College, Toronto, a Doctor of Laws degree from Asbury College, Kentucky, and a Doctor of Sacred Theology from Liberty University, Virginia.

This DVD presentation is designed to introduce a range of apologetic arguments and strategies. It does this by using a classical method of apologetics. Many apologists contribute by presenting lectures in the topics of truth and reality, the existence of God, establishing a worldview, the Trinity in terms of apologetics, and many more. As with other works in apologetics, this DVD series has a primary focus of demonstrating arguments in favor of Christian apologetics and not aimed at being a methodology of apologetics.

The resources for apologetic methodologies are very few. The class by Dr. Howe from the Southern Evangelical Seminary, a class on apologetics by Emmaus seminary and another class from the Masters Seminary, are the only three formal courses about the methodology of apologetics surveyed in this work<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Stevenson, Mr. "Apologetics" (Video of Lecture, Emmaus Seminary, Dubuque, IA, May 26, 2012), [www.emmaus.edu](http://www.emmaus.edu). For further information see Emmaus Seminary class by visiting [ItunesU/ Emmaus Seminary/](https://www.emmaus.edu/itunes)

These works were the core of the resources surveyed in order to facilitate a methodological tool for doing apologetics. It is important to not only define and explain what apologetics is, but to evaluate these systems from a historical point of view. The evaluation of these historical positions to apologetics provides a guide to determine a more effective way for selecting a methodology.

There are many reasons apologists are engaged in defending the faith. By finding the main reason(s) apologists engage their culture and challengers, a common thread among them could be outlined and defined to address similar contemporary issues more effectively. In the next chapters, this author will define and present a historical survey of the many apologists found in the Christian history.

### Summary

In this introductory chapter, the author of this thesis has delineated the foundation and steps for this work. The statement of limitation is clear in explaining that this work is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, this thesis addresses a need for a tool to aid in the taxonomy and selection of an apologetic methodology. The task for doing apologetics will always meet resistance and the apologists, if they develop solid *apologia*, will have a ministry that will not fade away any time soon.

The apologetic ministry or calling will always be required in the church. This thesis has evaluated the many Bible verses that address this issue, presenting a very strong case for doing apologetics. This has made the case that it is an absolute command to every believer to engage in

apologetics, and that refraining from doing so is not an option. The theoretical basis for this project thus presents, at the same time, the need for a unifying system. This system can be used to choose and aid in the process of doing apologetics.

The review of the literature is based on the analysis of the different methodology books dealing with the art of apologetics to the taxonomy of methods for doing apologetics. Although this list is not exhaustive, it presents a solid case in support of this thesis. In the next chapter, this work will present the definition of the terms and the purpose for doing apologetics, using some of the most-noted sources that endeavor in the process of defining apologetics.

## CHAPTER 2

### Definition and purpose of apologetics

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

1 Peter 3:15-17

Beloved, when I gave you all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 3

### Definition

The definition of apologetics is a complex one. The term came from the Greek word *apologia* and was used in a legal context.<sup>1</sup> It attempts to persuade unbelievers as well as believers to the truth claims of Christianity. In a true sense, apologetics is an art, the art of persuasion. Some of its roots could be found in the defense of Socrates at the Athenian court. Socrates was accused of corrupting the young and refusal to worship the Hellenistic gods. This was recorded by Plato in his *Apology* where he mentions the attempt of Socrates to prove his innocence.<sup>2</sup> "Paul used the verb *apologeomai* (related to the noun *apologia*) this way in his defense before the Roman governors Felix and Festus and King Agrippa II."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, an apologist is a person who "...is prepared to defend the message against criticism and distortion,

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<sup>1</sup> James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: Why it is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> H. Wayne House and Dennis W Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope: an Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 2.

and to give evidences of its credibility."<sup>4</sup> The English word "apologetics" derives its origin from the Greek word *apologia*. This word is a transliteration, not a translation. The word literally means "a reasoned statement or a verbal defense."<sup>5</sup>

The word *apologia* refers to a person's oral defense. This word is often misunderstood by many people who think that the apologist is apologizing or expressing regret for the defense (or existence) of the faith. This is far from the true intent of the word apologetics. Once again, the word apologetics is derived from *apologia*, related to an oral argument, and the English word is simply a transliteration from the original Greek.

In the New Testament, the word is used as a noun as well as a verb. The word often refers to an oratory defense during a legal accusation.<sup>6</sup> There are many instances where the word "apologia" is used in the Bible. Some examples are Acts 22:1, where Paul is speaking to a Jewish mob, and he is *defending* himself. Also, in Acts 25:16, where Paul is *defending* himself from the accusations and claiming that he is a Roman citizen, an action repeated in basic form in 1 Corinthians 9:3, another example of Paul being attacked. In Philippians 1:7, Paul is claiming that even being bound in chains he still *defends* and confirms the Gospel and, as noted above, in 1 Peter 3:15, where he cites the book of Isaiah about setting apart God in our hearts and be ready to do a *defense*.

Apologetics has become a discipline within theology. In fact, theology cannot be separated from apologetics. Dr. Alister E. McGrath explains that theology offers a framework of beliefs and doctrine that are the very heart of Christian faith. As an extension of this framework,

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<sup>4</sup> C.H. Pinnock, "Apologetics," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. D.F. Wright, S.B. Ferguson, and J.L. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 36.

<sup>5</sup> R.C., Sproul, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Crossway Books: Wheaton, IL, 2003), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approach to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Paternoster. Colorado Springs, CO. 2005), 1.

theology provides the apologist with Gospel, with truths that can counter the false beliefs or non-Christian worldview attacks on faith. Summarizing, Dr. McGrath concludes that: "Just as the science of apologetics is partly concerned with theological analysis of the Christian proclamation, so the art of apologetics is concerned with the imaginative and creative application of its respective components to its audiences."<sup>7</sup>

Dr. McGrath has a very strong case for apologetics being founded in theology. On the other hand, there are those who will not agree entirely with this position and contend that the philosophy of religion also deals with apologetics. As Dr. Ronald Nash explains, regarding apologetics as a branch of theology could be understood as stating that the apologist is close-minded, arguing from a pre-conceived conclusion. For Dr. Nash "... (T)he philosopher of religion, or so the argument goes, is open-minded, personally detached, and willing to follow an argument wherever it leads."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Nash contends that more often than not, Christian philosophers also presented arguments to support their position and that they were already committed to them just like the apologists. Nash mentions, "... a great deal of work in the philosophy of religion can also be characterized as apologetics. And this apologetic activity is engaged in by believers and unbelievers alike."<sup>9</sup>

There is no doubt that these two fields are interrelated. Both have at their core the rational structure of many logical aspects of the human intellect, meaning that these two disciplines are not irrational. Some would argue that the existence of reason precludes the existence of faith and

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<sup>7</sup> Alister E. McGrath, in Frank D. Chance, "A Philosophical Evangelical Apologetic for Contemporary Postmodernism" master's thesis, Trinity Bible College and Seminary, 2005), 32.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 1988), 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

the existence of faith renders reason as an insolence. On the other hand, faith is not credulity, and Biblical faith is far from being irrational.

Some critics and commentators have said, "Apologetics deals with theism and evidences deals with Christianity," or that "Apologetics deals with philosophy, while evidences deals with facts."<sup>10</sup> The author of this thesis understands that apologetics is not limited to Christianity alone. There are many fields and religions that are involved in doing apologetics. For this reason, the author denotes that every time the word apologetics is used in this work, the context is within the Christian faith alone.

Apologetics could be easily defined as reasoned defense of the Christian religion.<sup>11</sup> In a sense, it is like A. J. Hoover has explained: "We can say that reason without faith is empty and faith without reason is blind."<sup>12</sup> This discipline seeks to serve God and the Church by helping the believer fulfill the commandment given by the Holy Spirit to Peter in 1 Peter 3:15. In fact, apologetics is more than that, for this discipline is considered an art of persuasion by many. Classifying apologetics as an art opens the doors wider for those who want to practice it. This art or discipline is not only entrusted to the theologians, but to everyone who desires to do it. This art involves more than oral persuasion. Apologetics requires a spiritual disposition and an impeccable testimony. It requires a prior commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Although this discipline is intended to present a defense, the contrary is equally true. It aids believers to sustain and augment their faith. In other words, it gives correction and foundations for a person's beliefs, either by testing the claims of those beliefs or by explaining them. This is something that is

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<sup>10</sup> Cornelious Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*. 2nd ed. edited by William Edgar (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing. 2003), 17.

<sup>11</sup> R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: a Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 13.

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Hoover, *The Case for Christian Theism: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 1976), 37.

particular to Christianity. Other systems of religion do not even allow for the possibility of questioning or analysis.

Apologetics is first a tool that the Holy Spirit uses throughout a person's life. "In the ultimate sense, God is the primary apologist."<sup>13</sup> Apologetics is often defined as the branch of theology that seeks to answer the questions of how and why a person believes. The birth of this term as a discipline is attributed to Plank (1794) and Schleiermacher (1811).<sup>14</sup> Another aspect of this concept is what theologians call "metapologetics." The term is used to define epistemological foundations for doing apologetics.<sup>15</sup> Metapologetics is then a branch of apologetics and refers to "the study of the nature and methods of apologetics."<sup>16</sup>

Finally, apologetics could be explained by defining what it is not. That is, apologetics is not to use syllogisms or analogies to explain the word of God or to oversimplify its claims of truth. In its beginnings, apologetics was aimed primarily at obtaining tolerance for Christians, allowing the beliefs to find fertile ground amidst rejection and doubt. This approach slowly shifted through the centuries to where apologetics is now more about proving the rationality of its claims than it is about defending the validity of them.

The purpose of apologetics is a different matter and will be explained in greater detail later in this chapter. Nevertheless, why do Christians engage in the discipline of apologetics? The main answer is that Christians are endowed and commanded by God to do it. The Lord has

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<sup>13</sup> W. C. Campbell-Jack, Gavin J. McGrath, and C. Stephen Evans, eds., *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Breckinridge, Warfield. "Apologetics," accessed, June 3, 2012, [www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/warfield\\_apologetics.html](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/warfield_apologetics.html)

<sup>15</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., "Apologetics," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 82.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approach to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Paternoster. Colorado Springs, CO. 2005), 4.

commanded his people to engage all humans in their respective culture for His glory. The Christian faith is not a set of beliefs that must be blindly assented to. Rather, it is the revelation of God to humans through a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, apologetics is both a lifestyle as well as a means for a relationship with the ultimate goal of changing the hearts of men through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The apologist must understand, believe, and assent to the Christian claims revealed in the Bible and the whole counsel of God. Furthermore, these abstract concepts must produce a change in the apologist life. As an apologist, the person must display the character and love of the One who called him to that vocation.

Apologetics has three main functions. First, it is a discipline that vindicates the claims of Christianity. The apologists show that Christianity is rational/coherent and that the contrary viewpoints rejecting it are false. Using philosophical arguments, evidences, and the art of persuasion, apologists demonstrate the validity of the Christian faith.

Second, it refutes the false accusations against Christianity. The aim here is to demonstrate that it is not irrational to hold a set of presuppositions or assumptions about Christianity. There are many attacks upon the Christian faith and apologists have the task and the call to answer those claims. This has been happening since the early years of the Christian faith. Tertullian, one of the early apologists, defended the claims of Christianity from attacks both from the inside and outside of the church.<sup>17</sup> There are several ways that apologists go about doing this. Some of these are the use of logic, archeology, and history.

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<sup>17</sup> Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner, eds. "*Tertullian*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 469.

The fields of other sciences are also used, but to a lesser degree. That is not to say that Christianity is opposed to science. In fact, many of the greatest scientists were believers of a deity and understood that this higher being orchestrated the complexity of the universe. For some, the knowledge about the existence of this deity was possible through scientific investigation of the creation. As Romans chapter 1 explains, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). Christianity focuses more on who created and science focuses more on the how. This does not mean that the accounts of creation as explained in the book of Genesis do not explain the "how."

Finally, the third main function is that apologetics aims to refute and point out the discrepancies in other systems of belief. These functions could be summarized by the word persuasion. The apologist engages in the art of persuasion either to give a positive case for Christianity or to persuade against the claims of other systems. As another author has said, "But apologetics is offered not only in response to the doubts and denials of non-Christians."<sup>18</sup>

### Reasons People Give for Rejecting Apologetics

There are some Christians who are uncomfortable with apologetics. This trend has increased since the middle of the twentieth century. Commenting on this very fact, Laurence J. McGinley states, "Towards the middle of the twentieth century apologetics, perhaps for the first time, acquired a bad name among Christians themselves."<sup>19</sup> Because of this perception many

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<sup>18</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove. IVP. 2011), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 432.

seminaries eliminated the required apologetics courses from their program.<sup>20</sup> Often, these same people reject the whole idea for doing apologetics. What are some of the reasons for this antagonism? Some of the reasons include a person fears public exposure or is uncomfortable with confrontation or debate or there could be a perception that arguments on a particular issue are deemed as attacks against the person, that the person feels theologically ill-equipped or insecure in using apologetics or that they believe apologetics is ineffective in evangelism.<sup>21</sup>

Another set of reasons people reject the use of apologetics is because they claim that:

1. The truths of the Bible do not need to be defended.
2. That God cannot be known by the use of human reason and that the natural man is incapable of understanding God.
3. That the apologist, should not "answer a fool according to his folly."
4. That apologetics is not used in the Bible.
5. That person really only needs faith.
6. That God is not being pleased since the Bible says "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

These and many other factors are the foundation for a rejection of apologetics in our culture and thus are factors that must be conquered by the apologist. In an article written in the *Christian Research Journal*, Sean McDowell explains that the reason for rejecting apologetics is

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<sup>20</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 434.

<sup>21</sup> See. H. Wayne House and Joseph M. Holden, *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), chart 2.

not strictly Biblical or about apologetics, but that the rejection comes from the character of the apologist. McDowell goes on to explain that there are two categories for rejecting apologetics. The first one deals with the behavior of the apologist, while the second deals with people's understanding of Christianity and culture.<sup>22</sup> Dr. Ravi Zacharias also agrees with this concept, stating that: "I have little doubt that the single greatest obstacle to the impact of the gospel has not been its ability to provide answers, but rather the failure on our part to live it out."<sup>23</sup>

The approach that the apologist takes in presenting a good apologia is essential to the outcome of the Gospel in a person's life. When the Bible mentions that the person must engage in the defense of the Gospel with meekness and respect, it is so that the message will not face barriers within the hearts of people. There are many other barriers that the public will bring to an apologetic conversation. Nevertheless, what the Bible is trying to convey, in the previous passage, is that at least the apologist should not add more weight to the load of apologetics by being an unworthy witness.

The author of this thesis understands that the task of doing apologetics strikes at the core of human's basic fears. The idea to speak in public or to feel rejected by others because of dissenting views can be devastating to a person's ego.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, a Christian apologist has the necessary tools for accomplishing this task. In fact, the apologist is not only equipped, but is not alone when doing apologetics. The Bible states in Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and

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<sup>22</sup> Sean McDowell, "Why Apologetics Has a Bad Name", *Christian Research Journal* 35, no 3 (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Ravi Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler, eds., *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 25.

<sup>24</sup> For a more concise study of this type of fear see, Steven Hyman, *The Science of Mental Health, vol 10, Fear and Anxiety* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 47-48.

in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Since God has called all Christians to do apologetics, it is of great comfort for the church that He is in the midst with them. The person doing apologetics should not be fearful. In fact, the contrary must be true. When a person proclaims a message with truth and boldness, then the message is better received by the audience.

Another aspect for rejecting apologetics is the many factors that would minimize the use of this discipline in the church due to a lack of training or time. The task of doing apologetics can be an overwhelming one. This discipline requires time and effort. Many pastors feel the pressure when they have to balance the daily pastoral duties with the rigorous preparation for any apologetics task. Peter J. Grants comments that apologetics might be perceived as an intrusion on the tasks and goals a ministry has. It might raise eyebrows or cause frowns in a congregation to bring up the topic or focus attention on unbelievers and their doubts. However, Dr. Grants makes his position very clear when he states that: "Restoring the biblical role of apologetics requires leadership, dedication, and a deep conviction that God's fundamental call to pastors is to nurture the life of the church and to address the needs of the world."<sup>25</sup>

This pressure is being felt by many pastors. Nevertheless, this has no validity for rejecting apologetics as a whole.

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<sup>25</sup>In Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, eds., *Is your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 55.

## Purpose of apologetics

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Apologetics has a clear goal to elucidate the claims of Christianity. At its core, apologetics shows the truth of Christianity to unbelievers and augments the beliefs of those who are in the Christian faith. Apologetics aims "at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel before men in an intelligent fashion, so that they can make a meaningful commitment under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>26</sup> That is, without the clear understanding of these fundamental issues, the apologist could not be properly called a Christian apologist.

Apologetics serves two main purposes: "(1) To bolster the faith of Christian believers and (2) To aid in the task of evangelism"<sup>27</sup> As one author has said, "Apologetics deals with core Christian issues, .... What apologetics defends are the notions that, if removed from a system of beliefs, would eliminate the sense in which that system could be called Christian."<sup>28</sup>

Apologetics uses words to prove or defend a case, therefore, an apologist must have a solid command over the art of rhetoric. Christians face many attacks such as Bible criticism, scientific challenges, postmodern values attacks, etc. "The purpose of apologetics, therefore, is to provide a rational defense of Christianity that addresses concerns like these in language that

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<sup>26</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1977), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Steven B. Cowan, ed. *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 8.

<sup>28</sup> James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: Why it is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 19.

hearers can understand."<sup>29</sup> That is, by the use of rhetoric, apologetics aims to show that Christianity is reasonable. This is done by the use of philosophical arguments, as well as evidence from science, archeology, and history.

The main purpose to do apologetics could be defined in two parts. The first attempts to persuade a person. The second attempts to defend the claims of the truths in Christianity. Some apologists claim that this purpose or function of apologetics is achieved by a one or three step approach.<sup>30</sup> There is a common understanding that apologetics aims first at the intellect of the person and then the heart. To get to the heart, apologetics first conquers the head. "Even the most perfect argument does not move people as much as emotion, desire and concrete experience. Most of us know that our heart is our center, not our head. But apologetics gets at the heart through the head."<sup>31</sup>

Although there are those who will explain that there are many purposes for doing apologetics, the author of this thesis understands that there are basically two approaches to this concept. The Bible is clear that one of the purposes of apologetics is to persuade a person. The apostle Paul explains that, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Corinthians 5:11). There are several writers that agree with the apostle Paul. Dr. Alister McGrath explains, "First apologetics aims to persuade people that Christianity is true, whether this takes

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<sup>30</sup> See. Kenneth Boa. and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approach to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Paternoster. Colorado Springs, CO. 2005), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Kreeft and Ronald K, Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundred of Answers to Crucial Questions* ( Downers Grove, IL: IVP. 1994), 21.

the form of total assurance throughout a watertight argument from first principles, or recognition that Christianity is probably true through an inferential analysis of the world."<sup>32</sup>

In the same line of thinking, Dr. Maijastina Kahlos, a research fellow in the Department of Classical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki, Finland, comments, "Christian writers [one could say apologists alike] also attempt to persuade outsiders, either pagan or Jews, of the superiority of their own religion, both in showing opponents' errors and introducing the Christian truth."<sup>33</sup> In addition to this, Dr. Kahlos makes a good point by quoting from *Augustine's City of God*, "The first part of the work (book 1-10) is a learned *refutatio* of false *opiniones* of pagans while the second part (books 11-22) is a *demonstratio* of the true Christian doctrine....The church father aims not only to prove false the views of the pagans, but also to satisfy the doubts of hesitating individuals."<sup>34</sup>

Another scholar mentions, "The aim of apologetics is to prove the reasonableness of our faith."<sup>35</sup> In addition, "To establish these preliminary truths is the principal aim of apologetics. Its further and secondary object is to defend the individual truths of faith against doubt and error."<sup>36</sup> R. C Sproul asserts: "Apologetics can be used to show that Christianity is true and that all non-Christian world views are false."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths: Building Bridges to Faith Through Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 52.

<sup>33</sup> Maijastina Kahlos, *Debate and Dialog* (Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies) (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 63.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Franz Xavier Jos. Koch, Anna Maud Buchanan, and Charles Paul Bruehl, *A Manual of Apologetics* (New York: NY: Ulan Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 16.

There are other scholars who go beyond this important purpose of apologetics. They explain that not every person will be persuaded and that the persuasiveness of any argument is based on many factors. Dr. William Lane Craig says in his book *Reasonable Faith*: "Since we cannot hope to persuade everybody, our aim should be to make our cumulative apologetic case as persuasive as possible."<sup>38</sup> Dr. Craig adds: "[T]he persuasiveness of an argument as it is presented on any particular occasion may depend on a host of [rational] considerations, such as courteousness, openness, genuine concern for the listener and so forth."<sup>39</sup> He continues by saying, "The goal of offensive apologetics is to show that there is some good reason to think that Christianity is true, while the goal of defensive apologetics is to show that no good reason has been given to think Christianity is false."<sup>40</sup>

There is no doubt that reason and intellect plays a main role in apologetics. However, there is a difference between the use of reason to show or prove the Christian faith. As Dr. Craig explains, "We know Christianity is true primarily by the self-authenticating witness of God's Spirit. We show Christianity is true by demonstrating that it is systematically consistent."<sup>41</sup> In another quote, he states, "Reason can prove that God exists, but it cannot convince an unbeliever to believe in God."<sup>42</sup> Apologetics uses arguments to refute accusations made against the Christian faith, and in this purpose, it becomes closely related to evangelism. It could be considered as part of the foundation or the basis for doing the work of an evangelist or as part of

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<sup>38</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 56.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction xvi.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 1999), 332.

the process of evangelism. Apologetics helps removes intellectual barriers and prepares the spiritual grounds for the Gospel to be received both intellectually and emotionally.

Apologetics helps believers in their spiritual growth and discernment. There is a positive aspect to these two concepts because they are interrelated. As a person grows in their faith, so does their discernment. The spiritual growth is beneficial for the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is explained by the apostle Peter:

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge, to your knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

2 Peter 1:10-11

The other aspect related to this is spiritual discernment. This is a key issue in contemporary Christianity as discernment is needed in order to spot lies. Once again, the apostle Paul warns his audience in his Letter to the Colossians about the upcoming attacks to their faith. The apostle Paul explains: "As you, therefore, have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and establish the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through vain philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:6-8).

Paul, in this brief passage, is warning his audience on several key issues. He warns them about anyone cheating them with vain philosophy, with empty deceit, doctrines of men, and

basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. Paul is, in fact, calling out the Colossians to have discernment. Therefore, since there are many who are trying to deceive the church, the *ecclesia* must be ready and prepared to have the proper discernment to deal with these situations.

The discipline of apologetics also provides tools to identify false teachers or, in other words, preserve the purity of the Christian doctrine. This purpose of apologetics explains not only how it help the church to grow but it also helps the church identify and understand false doctrines. Finally, its ultimate function is to maintain the unity of the church. When the church uses Scripture and reason, the main components of apologetics, then the body of the church can maintain the proper unity and grow accordingly. "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chiloë's household, that there are contentions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10-11).

## Summary

In this chapter, the reader can perceive the range of definitions used for the word apologetics. At its core, apologetics is a discipline derived from theology. Nevertheless, it has its origins in the Word of God. The fundamental beliefs of Christianity are to be defended and explained, therefore, the apologist is first a theologian and then an apologist. The apologist must be an able speaker, for the use of words is the principal component of the apologist's arsenal.

There are many reasons that people give for rejecting apologetics. Nevertheless, these reasons are often emotional and rationally indefensible. The testimony of the apologist goes hand in hand with the proclamation of the message he or she is trying to convey. If one is opaque, the other is hindered. An apologist could be very eloquent and persuasive in presenting an apologetic discourse, but if the testimony of the apologist is questionable, then the response to the message of the Gospel is not well received. On the other hand, if an apologist has an impeccable testimony, but does not know how to or is not skilled in the use of the arguments, nor does he or she know how to defend the claims of Christianity, then the apologist will limit the potential of the message attempting to be conveyed.

There are many purposes for doing apologetics. The primary is that it is commanded in the Word of God. The principal idea is to remove the mental barriers so that the message of the Gospel can have a venue in the mind and so to reach the heart. Another main function of apologetics is to reinforce the beliefs of the Christian. People face many struggles in life, and they can cause a person to doubt their faith. Apologetics gives reasons to reinforce the Christian faith. Furthermore, the seed of doubt could be planted when arguments against Christianity seem

to be more plausible than not. Here apologetics augments the confidence in the Christian claims and helps the believer understand that there are good reasons to remain in the Faith.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Historical survey of apologetic methods**

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:4-6

The introductory summary of this thesis indicated that a complete survey of the history of apologetics is beyond the scope of this work. In this chapter, there is an introduction of particular apologists, the problems they faced, the answers given, and the contemporary method they have been classified under. This does not mean that a contemporary method was explained or available in their time. Rather, this thesis will categorize these apologists, for the sake of simplicity, to a contemporary method.

#### Old Testament Apologetics

Apologetics is not a modern concept. From the creation of mankind, the call for clarification of the revelation of God was needed. From the Fall, it is observed how the instructions of God were twisted by the devil. The focus of the Old Testament's apologetics leans more towards the validation of prophecy and the expression or revelation of God's nature and will. Therefore, the methodology of apologetics in the Old Testament is evidential in nature. This is not to say that the Old Testament does not have other means of doing apologetics. Instead, it is perceived by this thesis that Old Testament apologetics is focused more on the presupposition that there is a God and that this God reveals His truth by the means of prophetic discourse.

It seems that the Old Testament encompasses various methods for validating its claims, and that these form a type of basic core for the art of apologetics.. There is no doubt that there is engraved within the structure of the New Testament the concept of apologetics that is presented in the Old Testament. The New Testament presupposes the existence of God. The same presupposition is inferred from the structure in the Old Testament. The reader of both testaments will come to the conclusion that there is no doubt to this fact. Since both Testaments were written by Jewish authors, it is of no surprise that they will have many elements in common.

The Jewish peoples, as well as their pagan neighbors, were deeply religious. By surveying the Old Testament, a person will understand that Jews and their surrounding nations believed in God or gods. The Old Testament begins with an apologetic statement: "In the beginning, God..." (Gen 1:1). This is a bold statement by the Jews, as they lived in the midst of polytheistic nations. This could be considered a positive apologetic or a negative apologetic. It is positive because this statement is making a distinct claim for the God of the Jews. Contrary to this, it is also negative apologetics because it is countering the false notion of a polytheistic world. Drs. Hughes and Laney say: "Genesis1:1-2:4 shows the original nature of creation in three ways. First, the creation revealed the character of its creator. The nation of Israel and redeemed people of all ages need to know that God is the supreme Creator of the universe, the One who creates merely by speaking a word."<sup>1</sup>

This information found in the first verse of the Bible contains a notion of supreme apologetic importance. As previously mentioned, apologists have endeavored in the task of answering the intrigues of the faith. The apologetics content of the first verse is explained in a very simple language. "In simple, concise, nontechnical language, Moses answers one of the big

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<sup>1</sup> Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Tyndale Reference Library) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 9.

questions of life: 'Where did the earth come from?' Says Moses, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."<sup>2</sup> The first few chapters of the book of Genesis serve as a clash against the pagan gods of their neighbors. In the book *Reasons for Our Hope: An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, Otto Procksch is quoted saying: "This first word of the Bible expresses the basic relationship of God and universe that is present in creation. The term for creation (*bara'*) denies any relationship of God and cosmos through nature... Rather, God and cosmos are essentially distinct, underivable from one another, God is not the world and the world is not God; though certainly God does work in the world omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, available in it."<sup>3</sup>

The Old Testament presents a supreme and unique God as the basis for its apologetic elements. Once this foundation is laid, the authors of the Old Testament, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, conveyed the fact that this God is involved in the affairs of man. These authors presented this case in the literature known as prophecy. This is an evidentialist approach on the part of the authors to present an *apologia*. Old Testament prophets provided ample evidence for the existence of God; however, they did not set out to do this by any metaphysical or epistemological demonstration of the facts.

The premise of the case for God's existence was presupposed by the Jewish peoples. The issue with the prophets was to demonstrate the difference between their God and the gods of their pagan neighbors. They set out to demarcate this difference by showing which of them, the God of the Jews or the gods of their neighbors, was the one true God. As one author said about Israel's belief in one God: "Israelite monotheism was not derived from philosophical speculation

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<sup>2</sup>Howard F. Vos, *Genesis-Everyman's Bible Commentary*. New ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Wayne H. House and Dennis W. Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope: an Introduction to Christian Apologetics*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 126.

concerning the one and many, but from the knowledge of God's power, expressed in powerful acts."<sup>4</sup> The Old Testament has an emphasis on presenting God as a God of power. The authors' apologetic intent is to demonstrate that the God of the Jews is mighty, and the gods of the pagan nations are powerless and lifeless, non-existent in truth..

This notion of the God of the Jews as being the most powerful God is delineated through the Old Testament, presented from the very beginning in the context of the creation. Psalm 96:5 says, "For all the gods of the people are idols, but the LORD made the heavens." The prophet Jeremiah explains that the other gods are made out of wood and from the hands of men. He continues to explain that these gods have no life in them, in Jeremiah 10:14.

God is not only the powerful creator, but He is also the sustainer, responsible for controlling nature. This is evident through the miracles. The false gods are without power against nature, as is evident in the plagues of Egypt in the time of Moses. The contrast between the false gods of Egypt and Jehovah God is an attestation to the supremacy of the God of Israel. The miraculous extends its realm even to the prophets themselves, with the contrast between the prophets of Baal and Elijah as a good example of this.

Another aspect of the apologetic character of the Old Testament is history. In establishing the validity of the true God, the one who controls the affairs of men is the true God. "A God of life, of spirit, of power is a God of human affairs, and therefore history is a [*differentia*] to reveal the living God."<sup>5</sup> This concept was seen often throughout the Old Testament.

After looking at this information, what then was the apologetic approach of the Old Testament? It is perceived by this author that the apologetic approach is one that incorporated

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<sup>4</sup> George Ernest (1909-1974) Wright, *The Old Testament Against its Environment*/ G. Ernest Wright (London, England: SCM, 1951), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Ramm, The Apologetic of the Old Testament: The Basis of a Biblical and Christian Apologetic," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 1.4 (Fall 1958), 18.

apologetics from a Presuppositional and evidential points of view. That is, Presuppositional because it presupposes the existence of God and does not seek to prove it. Evidential because it incorporates the use of prophecy to validate its claims for a living God. This was more of a positive approach to apologetics rather than a negative/defensive approach.

In the Old Testament, God proved His power, validated His existence, and showed His faithfulness to the people of Israel. God demonstrated by many infallible proofs in the Old Testament that He alone is God. He showed this by demonstrating the futility of the idols that men worshiped. He did this by His direct intervention as in the case of Mount Carmel and by the use of His prophets to predict the future. Nevertheless, what about the use of apologetics in the New Testament? As another author very well puts it, "Where did the early believers look for such a passion apologetic? Obviously, they turned to their ancient scriptures. But their understanding of the Scriptures had been revolutionized by the ministry and teaching of Jesus."<sup>6</sup>

### New Testament Apologetics

The New Testament is not a comprehensive treaty in apologetics. As James K. Beilby states, "While none of the books of the New Testament is an apologetic text in a systematic sense, most contain an awareness of apologetic issues and exhibit apologetic concerns."<sup>7</sup> The pages of the New Testament give ample evidence that the authors were making a strong case for the Christian faith, providing clear answers and defending the truths of Christianity. They emphasized many aspects such as the divinity of Jesus, the resurrection, the fulfilled prophecies

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<sup>6</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 55.

<sup>7</sup> E. F. Scott, *The Apologetics of the New Testament* (New York: Putman, 1907); F. F. Bruce, *The Defense of the Gospel in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977); in James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Apologetics: What it is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011 ), 37.

in the person of Christ, and wrote against the perversion of doctrines from within and from outside of the church.<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt that the New Testament is portraying an apologetic tone. Dr. Dulles states:

Factual memories, dogmatic reflections, and apologetic arguments became so intertwined in apostolic preaching that it would be artificial to try to draw a line between them. To the minds of believing Christians, the events themselves bore witness to the divine mission of Jesus, interpreted the meaning of His career, and served to clear up the doubts and difficulties that might arise in the minds of those called to believe. To some degree, therefore, apologetics was intrinsic to the presentation of the kerygma.<sup>9</sup>

Within the pages of first Gospel, a person can see the apologetical purpose of the genealogies of the Lord Jesus. The idea is to present a case on the prophetic evidence of Jesus' lineage and thus entails an apologetic defense of Jesus' ministry to the Jews. The author of the Gospel presents Jesus as a direct descendent of King David. Apologetics in the New Testament was directed towards convincing the Jews of the truth and the veracity of Christ's deity through the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Dr. Dulles explains that: "While none of the New Testament writings is directly and professedly apologetical, nearly all of them contain reflections of the Church's efforts to exhibit the credibility of its message and to answer the obvious objections that would have arisen in the minds of adversaries, prospective converts, and candid believers."<sup>10</sup> He also mentions that the event of the resurrection marks a key moment in the lives of the early believers.<sup>11</sup> This event would give birth to many objections that the Church needed to address. "Once the Church had set forth her view of the death and resurrection of Jesus, interpreted in the light of Hebrew Scripture,

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Bowman, Jr., *Orthodoxy and Heresies: A Biblical Guide to Doctrinal Discernment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 71-73.

<sup>9</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

certain objections would naturally have risen, thus prompting developments that were simultaneously dogmatic and apologetic."<sup>12</sup> The Gospels then change the focus from the lineage of Jesus to the life of Jesus.

### Apologetics According to Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was the greatest apologist who ever existed. This might sound like a bold claim, but it is true. When Jesus was on the Earth, He defended and explained the Word and His words to others. Jesus was always involved in either positive or negative apologetics. In essence, He was making claims about himself (positive apologetics) or correcting claims about himself (negative apologetics). Jesus, as a great teacher, always had several methods to reach His audience. He used reason, parables, appealed evidences and many other methods in order to provide an apologia of His nature.

Jesus provided enough evidence for His divinity, much more than any other apologist. He claimed to be God in the flesh. Jesus claimed equality with God the Father when He said: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Jesus commanded: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe the claims of Jesus. He claimed to give life, forgive sins, be a higher authority than the Old Testament, Truth incarnate and equal in nature with God Almighty. These claims were extremely bold in the context of a Jewish audience. Nevertheless, He provided an apologetic ministry to disclose His divinity.

There is an example, on the part of Jesus, to claim His deity. In the Gospel of John, there was a blind man. This man was waiting for a miracle for many years. When Jesus appeared to this blind man, He said to this man that he was healed. This was done on the Sabbath, and many

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<sup>12</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 27.

were alarmed by this. Therefore, Jesus' apologetic was, by action, directed in defense of His deity by claiming to be a higher authority than the Law of Moses. Leon Morris comments on this passage saying, "One thing only is certain. Nowhere else in the Gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, orderly, regular statement of His own unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority, and proofs of His Messiahship, as we find in this disclosure."<sup>13</sup>

In the same passage, Jesus employed a system more aligned with an evidentialist method of apologetics. He was initially accused of blasphemy for equating himself with God. He brought witnesses to validate His claim and refute the wrong notions of the attackers. However, the apologetic approach of Jesus is not limited to only one method. He employs different techniques to captivate His audience. One of these techniques is the use of parables. Dr. Philip Payne wrote his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University on this topic. He states, "Out of the fifty-two recorded narratives parables, twenty depict Him in imagery which in the Old Testament typically referred to God. The frequency with which this occurs indicates that Jesus regularly depicted Himself in images which were particularly appropriate for depicting God."<sup>14</sup>

Jesus' use of parables directs the attention of His listeners to the stories in the Old Testament. Often, Jesus applied images that are clearly expressing a character of God to himself. For example, Jesus portrays himself as "the good Shepherd" and the Old Testament used this analogy to God himself in Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34. Jesus also portrays himself as the bridegroom and God the Father is also portrayed as the bridegroom in Isaiah 49, Jeremiah 2 and

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<sup>13</sup> John Charles Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: St. John, Volume 1* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1874), 283. Also cited in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (The New International Commentary On The New Testament)*, Revised ed. (New York: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 276.

<sup>14</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 80.

Hosea. Therefore, for those who were not in favor of Jesus' claim to deity, Jesus uses parables in order to bolster the authenticity of His claims for deity. In John 14, Jesus says to His audience "Believe in God, believe also in me."<sup>15</sup> This is a clear example of Jesus equating himself to the level of deity.

Jesus also used the faculties of the mind to prove His deity. James W. Sire comments on this by citing Dallas Willard: "We need to understand that Jesus is a thinker. This is not a dirty word, but an essential word and that his other attributes do not preclude thought, but only insure that he is certainly the greatest thinker of the human race: "the most intelligent person who ever lived on earth." He constantly uses the power of logical insight to enable people to come to the truth about themselves and [about] God from the inside of their own heart and mind."<sup>16</sup>

Jesus understood that the *imago Dei* meant that humans have the faculty of reasoning. The Lord many times used the laws of logic as an apologetic tactic against His opponents. In a clear example where His opponents wanted to trap Jesus, they asked Him about the tributes to the Roman Emperor. If Jesus answered in the positive to His opponents, then He would have had to recognize a higher authority (Cesar). However, if He answered in the negative, then He was against the authority of Cesar. Jesus masterfully understands this fallacious comment and dismisses His opponents with a tactful answer. Therefore, by escaping what philosophers call the fallacy of the "horns of a dilemma" Jesus provides a third alternative and escapes flawlessly from His opponents.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John 14:1

<sup>16</sup> Dallas Willard cited in James W. Sire, *Habits of The Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 181.

<sup>17</sup> To see more in depth the logical fallacies see, Norman Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks. *Come Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 1990), 81-118.

The Lord Jesus also used miracles in His apologetic armory. As Dr. Geisler says: "If miracles have no evidential value, then there is no objective, historical evidence to support the claims of historic, orthodox Christianity."<sup>18</sup> Jesus Christ appealed to the miraculous for validation of his deity. This is seen when He was asked by the Pharisees to make a miracle, and Jesus spoke about the sign of Jonah. This sign was a claim for the resurrection where He clearly demonstrated His divinity by resurrecting from the dead.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, Jesus' method of apologetics is not a fixed system where he defined his divinity and described how prophecy was fulfilled in Him. His approach to apologetics was very practical and eclectic. It is characterized by the ability to adjust as the need justified it. Jesus used a plethora of tactics with his audience. He would ask questions (a platonic approach), make bold statements (as classical apologist do), appealed to the authority (as evidentialists do), quote Scriptures (as the presuppositionalists do), appealed to experiences as in the case of the Samaritan woman (as Fideist do), and performed miracles to validate His ministry.

Jesus' method could be defined as the Cumulative Case apologetics. This thesis would disagree with the authors of the book *The Apologetic of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing With Doubters* where they claim, "Jesus was a Classical Apologist."<sup>20</sup> The reason for disagreement is clear, there are many examples of the apologetics of Jesus that testify to the contrary. The Lord assumes that his audience already believes in God. If Jesus is to be classified as a classical apologist, then He would have had to prove the existence of God and then continue to make His *apologia*, or in other words, a two-step approach. Nevertheless, this two-step

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<sup>18</sup> Norman L. Geisler, "Apologetic Value of Miracles" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 452.

<sup>19</sup> See Matthew 12:38-39

<sup>20</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. 2009), 195.

approach is not clearly delineated in the apologetic of Jesus. What the author of this thesis would agree is that Jesus was not a Fideist. Jesus never asked anyone to believe in Him without any reasonable cause or on the basis of subjective feelings alone.

The claims of Jesus were neither incoherent nor illogical. Rather, He substantiated his claims with evidences and/or logic. This model practiced by Jesus must be an example for all those who want to be engaged in apologetics. He adjusted as the need arose. He met people right at their level and led them to where He wanted them to be. A clear analysis of His methodology will conclude that, before Jesus was engaged in apologetics, he knew the hearts of men. This knowledge of the hearts of men aided Him to the proper system of apologetics.

The rest of humanity does not have the divine attribute that Jesus has to decipher the thoughts of the human heart. The ability that the rest of humanity has is to ask questions. The ability of Jesus Christ to ask questions, to a degree, helped provide for a model that guides the contemporary apologists to use a system that would help them persuade and defend the Faith more effectively. The apologist could categorize the presuppositions of the other person by performing an analysis guided with and by questions. These questions would reveal the nature of the claim or intrigue and guide the apologist. These questions allow the apologist to give a better answer "for the hope that is within."

#### The Gospels as an Apologetic

The Gospels display an apologetic methodology that is very important for the essence of the Christian faith. There are theologians who will disagree with the previous statement. One of them says, "[O]ne must ask to what extent the four Gospels (and Acts, which is the second part of Luke's work) fit the category of apologetic documents. As is obvious at a glance, they bear

little resemblance to modern apologetical treatises. They are narrative in form and contain little sustained argumentation. They purport to tell a story rather than prove a case."<sup>21</sup>

The Gospels are written using eyewitness accounts or accounts that are closely related to the original sources and do hold an apologetic value. These original sources are usually called primary and secondary evidences respectively. These evidences carry an apologetic value that is indispensable for any apologist. These evidences are historical facts that would stand any rigorous examination in a legal court.<sup>22</sup> The Bible states, "That which we have seen and heard declared we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

There is a real apologetic value to these documents as pieces of history. They were written by those who saw and touched Him whom they were describing. These accounts were not fables. The apostle Peter stated, "For we did not follow cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

The Gospels have an apologetic value not only because of their historical content but also because of their theological content. The Gospel of John is a good example of this. John has a clear intent in his Gospel and it is that his audience believes in Jesus through miraculous signs. John explains: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20: 30-31).

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<sup>21</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 16.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the legal historical accounts of the Gospels see, Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995).

John's approach seemed to be leaning towards an evidentialist method of apologetics. There are other aspects that John addressed in his writings that had an apologetic motif. There was a sect early in the history of the church called Docetism. This movement is defined by Dr. Matt Benson as "The assertion that Christ's human body was a phantasm, and that his suffering and death were mere appearances. If he suffered, he was not God; if he was God, he did not suffer."<sup>23</sup> This group was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. Dr. Groningen writes: "These Gnostics thinkers had drunk deeply at the fountains of philosophy; they had delightfully participated in the Hellenistic schools of speculation. They were of relationships. They were men who sought solutions to the basic problems of life and sought to formulate their answers in accordance with the terminology, the religious symbols and the cultural modes of their day."<sup>24</sup>

Although these Gnostics were infiltrating the early church, the Gospel of John was an *apologia* to the Jews. There was a purpose in the mind of the apostle John that is seen in his Gospel. "John's desire to persuade, particularly Diaspora Jews and proselytes, that the Messiah and Son of God is, in fact, Jesus."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the apostle John seemed to be addressing the Docetists in an apologetic matter to counter their false notion of the incorporeal nature of Jesus. John emphasizes many times the physical aspects of Jesus Christ. He portrayed Jesus as one who is hungry, exhausted, and as one whom the apostles were able to touch. Therefore, if the charge against the physical aspects of Jesus were surfacing those early days of Christianity, then John clearly gives an *apologia* in his Gospel to the contrary.

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<sup>23</sup> Cited in Norman L. Geisler, "Docetism," *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 1999), 202.

<sup>24</sup> Gerard Van Groningen, *First Century Gnosticism: Its Origin and Motifs* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1967), 107.

<sup>25</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 37.

The events leading to the Passion, as recorded in the Gospels, were met by many objections. The major objection was to the crucifixion itself. For the Jewish set of beliefs, the idea of being crucified eliminated any hope of Jesus being the Jewish Messiah. The book of Deuteronomy explains, "For he who is hanged is accursed by God" (Deuteronomy 21:23). Therefore, the redemptive work of Jesus was originally received with hostility. This gave rise to an apologetic answer, and the apostle Paul gave a reasonable rebuttal by quoting Deuteronomy 27:26 and Galatians 3:10. When the skeptical readers evaluate the arguments, they have to adapt their perspectives to include a plausible understanding of the Passion as an apologetic. A comparison of all the Passion accounts in the Gospels will show that they have an apologist tone. As Cardinal Avery Dulles explains, "A comparative study of the Passion narratives in the four Gospels reveals an increasing preponderance of apologetics motifs. This is apparent, first, in the growing insistence that every detail unfolds "as it was written" in the Old Testament."<sup>26</sup>

The Book of Acts further explains the apologetic approaches that many in the early Church had. The defense of Stephen, for example, although tragic in the history of the church, was a rebuttal on the thoughts of Judaism. Stephen counteracts the wrong notions of the Jews by presenting an apologia in the style of a prophet. He claimed that God must be sought by Christ and prophets like himself. By doing this, Stephen was equating himself with the prophet predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. By reading Luke's writings, a person could deduce that his approach to apologetics was more akin to a cumulative case method of apologetics.

The Gospels present a true apologetic value. Every one of the writers of the Gospels has a specific audience in mind, and a specific method that they employed. It is not hard to deduce that

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<sup>26</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 6.

Matthew had a presuppositional approach. He is seen many times writing to a Jewish audience and using more of the authority of the Old Testament than any of the other evangelists. As previously mentioned, Luke's approach is the recollection of evidences for his apologetics. In other words, the cumulative case approach. On the other hand, Mark's method is more fideistic. Mark is determined to present Jesus Christ as the church considered Him in faith and to highlight His human side. The apostle John begins his gospel with the concept of the Logos and equates his prologue to that of Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. The evangelists had different approaches and a common goal of explaining "Who was Jesus?" This in and of itself is an apologetic. As James Sire mentions, "The answer the Gospels give is itself an apologetic."<sup>27</sup>

### The Apostle Paul as an Apologist

There is no doubt that the apostle Paul was engaged in doing apologetics. He began his career related to Christianity as a stringent persecutor of the Christians. Nevertheless, his encounter with the risen Lord changed his life forever. Much of the apostle Paul's writings are apologetic in nature. There were many times that he had to defend his apostleship among his brethren. In the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his apostolic ministry against attackers. Perhaps the clearest example of the apostle Paul being engaged in the task of doing apologetics was his encounter with the Greeks at the Areopagus, also known as Mars Hill.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Dr. Alister McGrath explains, "This was also the site of the Platonic Academy... If Christianity

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<sup>27</sup> James Sire, *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 25.

<sup>28</sup> William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint. *Christian Apologetics: Past and Present. vol. 1* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway. 2011), 21.

[was] to take root in this city, it would have to engage the city's formidable philosophical heritage. Paul stepped up to the plate, and rose to this challenge."<sup>29</sup>

This description of the encounter between the apostle Paul and the Athenian audience is found in Acts 17. In this report, Paul builds a bridge to connect with his Hellenistic audience. The apostle Paul perceived that the Athenians are very religious and proceeded to commend them for this. By acting this way, Paul has set his audience for the introduction of the Gospel. He presented Jesus as the resurrected Lord to the Athenians. The account in the book of Acts mentions that some were alarmed, and some were intrigued. Paul's approach was classical and evidential in nature. Paul used an appeal to authority approach when he was quoting some of the Athenian philosophers in order to persuade them.

The use of Athenian philosophy and poetry was crucial for the apologetics tactic of Paul in the Areopagus.

Paul's Athens sermon engages people from a very different cultural context... Since his audience does not know the Old Testament, Paul draws upon literary authorities with which they are familiar--in this case, the Athenian poet Aratus, widely regarded as one of the greatest central icons of his day. [...] Paul's apologetic address at Athens offers important insights about how to adapt the proclamation of the gospel to a local audience.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the encounter with the Athenians, Paul had several encounters with the Jewish authorities. In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul presents a standard defense of the faith by appealing to the moral character of humans. "The beginning of Romans represents a standard defense of the faith, wherein the point of contact is social depravity, proof of the wrath

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<sup>29</sup> Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 2011), 63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

of God against fallen humanity. Both Jews and Gentiles are accountable, since they have in their different ways "suppress[ed] the truth."<sup>31</sup>

### Patristic Era of Apologetics

The Patristic Era was the era of confrontation. As the church grew in the midst of the Roman Empire, many challenges were presented to the Christian faith. One author said: "The appearance of the Christian apologists is an indication that the church took these calumnies seriously and had decided to do something about them."<sup>32</sup> Christians developed arguments to defend the faith in different settings. They argued against the government, the Jews and the heretics. The apologists endeavor in the task of validating the Christian faith with politicians. As Christianity grew, the Jews began to slander Christians and attempting to decrease their influence within the Roman Empire. There were tensions between the two groups, Christians and Jews, and the Roman Empire began to take matters into their own hands in an attempt to stabilize the Empire.

The focus of these writers was distinctly defensive. There were attacks from outside and inside of the church. Some of the attacks from the outside were from the philosophers, such as Celsus. The attacks from the inside were directed towards an undermining orthodoxy. Some of these assaults were launched against Christians with false accusations of cannibalism and atheism. The Romans understood that the Christians gathered to "eat the flesh and drink the blood" as a literal statement. Furthermore, the Roman Empire was being led by the cult of emperor worship, therefore, classifying Christians as atheists for not rendering worship to the

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<sup>31</sup> William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint. *Christian Apologetics: Past and Present. vol. 1* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway. 2011), 20.

<sup>32</sup> Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His life and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 2.

Roman Emperor. Apologists sought to discredit these claims and reinforce the idea that Christianity was not a threat to the Roman Empire. The main purpose of this type of defense was to gain tolerance within the Empire. This defense "sought to demonstrate the antiquity of Christian beliefs and sought to show that Christians were no threat to political stability."<sup>33</sup>

The apologists also addressed many of the philosophies of their time. They accomplished this by casting careful arguments against polytheism and idolatry that were familiar to the Hellenistic types of argumentation. There were Hellenistic Jews that supported the task of apologetics by arguing that the Torah was more ancient than even the foundations of Greek philosophy.<sup>34</sup> This could be perceived as a classical method of apologetics where the apologists of the Patristic period used philosophical arguments to advocate in favor of their beliefs. A good example of this was the fact that Christian apologists developed arguments to demonstrate the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in the person of Jesus Christ.

Other kinds of arguments were also developed to counteract the effects of heresy that were being propagated within Christians. Heresies such as Gnosticism and Ebionism were prevalent during the Patristic period of apologetics. Nevertheless, the most famous heresy during the patristic period was Arianism. This heresy taught that Jesus Christ was not divine and that God could have no part in human essence. The apologists of this period crafted responses and developed creeds to defend and protect the orthodox view of the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 41.

<sup>34</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 29-30.

<sup>35</sup> For further study about the Christian creeds see, J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2006). This is a comprehensive study of creeds that are well-known and not so well-known. The book mentions elements of creeds that were used in the New Testament including baptismal creeds. In the second chapter, the book shifts direction towards the second century and explains some of the Roman creeds and creeds from the Eastern Church. This work by Kelly gives much importance to the Nicene Creed and the Council of Nicea. There are some good contributions from the book worth mentioning. First, it presents an emphasis on liturgical setting of ancient creeds. Second, it shows the theology of these creeds from the perspective of the original

The early Patristic period was not an apologetic period *per se*. Most of the writing done during this period was primarily to establish the main tenets and beliefs of the Christian faith and its community. Dr. Dulles comments, "Like the New Testament writings, most of the non-canonical Christian literature until about A.D. 125 was concerned with establishing the faith and discipline of the Christian faith."<sup>36</sup> There were several men during this period that were key in the development of these Christian concepts, mainly "Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, and others."<sup>37</sup> These were church fathers that are within few generations of the apostles. Therefore, they are called Apostolic Fathers. Most of their work is found in Greek.

This thesis will now concentrate on four aspects of these apologists. These are:

1. The Patristic apologist
2. The attack against Christianity
3. The solution provided
4. The method employed

It must be mentioned here in the thesis that: "The earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament, known as the Apostolic fathers, were not concerned with this wider pagan world. Their concern was rather with the consolidation of the little Christian communities spread throughout the Greco-Roman world."<sup>38</sup> It is not until the second century that apologetic material was compiled by the church in defense of Christianity. Their early attempts of apologetics are recorded in history when they present the works of the Athenian philosopher Aristides and Quadratus. Both of these men wrote in defense of Christianity to Emperor Hadrian, in about 125

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authors. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 27.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His life and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 1.

A.D. As Dr. Dulles mentions, "...Aristide's *Apology* deserves high respect for its clarity and firmness of argument. By placing primary emphasis on the good moral lives of Christians, including their purity and charity, rather than the biblical miracles, this work lays the foundation for some of the most flourishing apologetics of the next few centuries."<sup>39</sup>

1. One of these apologists is Justin Martyr. (A.D. 100-167). Born in Falvia, Neapolis, Justin was one of the first apologists writing against the persecution of Christians in the Roman world. In one of his writings, he explains his dedication towards studying the philosophy of his era.

In his *Dialogue with Trypho* Justin describes how...one day as he stood near the Aegean Sea just outside the city of Ephesus, an old man approached him. "Does philosophy produce happiness?" asked the old man. "Absolutely," Justin replied, "and it alone." In an extended conversation, the old man suggested to Justin that there were many questions Plato could not answer. But there was a true philosophy with an explanation for all questions. That philosophy is Christianity.<sup>40</sup>

This account recorded the conversion of Justin Martyr. He then became professor of philosophical Christianity and in that role; he traveled and taught Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

2. The attack against Christianity that Justin Martyr dealt with was the vindication against slander about the Christian faith. The Roman Empire claimed that "The Christian faith was destructive of civic loyalty."<sup>41</sup> Christians were being accused of being atheists, immoral and bad citizens. Some of the attacks claimed that Christians married their siblings and murdered babies to drink their blood and eat their flesh.

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<sup>39</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>40</sup> Russ L. Bush, ed. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His life and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 34.

3. The solution provided by Justin Martyr was compiled in his writings called Justin's *Apology*. As L. Russ Bush explains, the *Apology* is structured in three parts. The first argues that the Christians are innocent of their accused crimes and that fair trials should precede any form of punishment. The second part argues that Christianity taught truth and that such teachings were not creators of immorality. Then Justin stated clearly that Jesus was uniquely the Son of God and that the defense he offered was "[D]emons had at least partial knowledge prior to the coming of Christ of what was to be. So, they inspired evil men to write myths and legends that anticipated the coming of Christ, and these have been used to reduce His influence and keep people away from Christ."<sup>42</sup>
4. The method employed by Justin Martyr can be closely associated with Fideism. He appealed to the experiential evidence of the Christians claiming that their character was commendable.
1. The next apologist to discuss is Athenagoras. (2nd century A.D.) Athenagoras was initially a persecutor of the church, just as Paul was in the first century A.D. This Patristic apologist was in charge of the school of Alexandria. As a philosopher, Athenagoras initially intended to write against the Christian faith. However, a rigid study of the Scriptures moved him from a persecutor to defender. He wrote one of the finest treaties of apologetics, called the *Embassy*. This apologetic treaty was addressed to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his son Lucius Aurelius Commodus. In his apologetic work, Athenagoras seems to have drawn upon a wide range of sources.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Russ L. Bush, ed. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

2. The attacks against Christianity that Athenagoras dealt with were essentially the same as those faced by Justin Martyr. There were three primary points of contention that he addressed: He replies to the charges of cannibalism, promiscuity and atheism, or as quoted: "THREE things are alleged against us: atheism, Thyestean feasts and Oedipodean intercourse."<sup>44</sup>
3. The solution provided by Athenagoras was also to define and focus on the moral character of the Christians. These Patristic apologists and Athenagoras responded to the accusation of Christians being atheist by saying that if they were atheists, then some of the famous Greek philosophers were atheists also, a response that undermined the supposed basis of the charge. To provide evidence for this defense, Athenagoras just pointed their accusers to some of the works of Greek literature. In it, the authors often referred to the gods as being a human invention, and that their lust was of the worst that humanity has ever practiced. To the accusations about Christians being subversive to the Empire, Athenagoras and Patristic apologists mentioned that the emperor did not need people who adored him, but rather people who would serve him.<sup>45</sup>
4. The apologetic method most applicable to Athenagoras is evidentialism, though not strictly so. "Evidentialism recognizes the importance of experience in the Christian life. Christian faith is not merely an intellectual acceptance of facts about Christ, but is a personal experience of a relationship with Christ."<sup>46</sup> For Athenagoras, his apologia

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<sup>44</sup> Russ L. Bush, ed. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 37.

<sup>45</sup> Justo L. Gonzales, *Historia del Cristianismo*, ed revisada. (Miami, FL.: Editorial Unilit, 1994), 76.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Boa, and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP ), 176.

dealt largely with Christian experience, but included Greek experiences for comparison and contrast.

1. The next Patristic Era apologist is Irenaeus. He was probably born in Smyrna around the year 130 A.D., and he was a known disciple of Polycarp. Typically, Irenaeus was not considered an apologist. He was considered more as a teacher and church father. However, he wrote an important apologist work called *Against Heresies*. In this work, Irenaeus attempted to refute Gnosticism and show the fallacies in it. He wrote his rebuttals from a biblical and pastoral perspective. His interest was not philosophical, and the focus of his ministry was to lead the people to sound doctrine.
2. The attack against Christianity that he dealt with was Gnosticism. "The bishop whom Irenaeus replaced had been martyred. Thus, he lived in a situation of constant physical danger. However, he considered the Gnostic heresies a more important danger, not to himself but to the church."<sup>47</sup> Gnosticism was very difficult to deal with because it had many similarities to Christianity. Irenaeus had to systematically dissect this heresy in order to properly deal with it.
3. The solution provided by Irenaeus was to go back to the Scriptures. Irenaeus held to a high and orthodox view of the Scriptures. He understood that heretics, almost by definition, do not correctly interpret Scriptures, with arguments that diverge from Christ's teachings. Also, their arguments and presence were deviation from apostolic tradition. Thus: "One way heretics may be exposed, Irenaeus thought, was to show that

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<sup>47</sup> Russ L. Bush, ed. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 64.

they have no natural place in the perpetual succession of bishops who had kept the faith pure from the apostolic times until the days in which he lived."<sup>48</sup>

4. Irenaeus could be placed in the category of Presuppositional apologetics because of his higher-level perception and emphasis on Scripture and its proper interpretation, based as it was on the nature of God as the origin of belief.
1. Tertullian (A.D. 155-235) was originally from Carthage, Africa. He was converted to Christianity around the age of forty. He was a student of literature, law and philosophy. He was trained in law, and many of his writings reflect the succinct approach of a defense attorney. Although he studied philosophy, he was not considered a philosopher.
2. The attacks to Christianity that Tertullian dealt with were the same as previously-mentioned slanders against the faith, and also dealing with the heretic Marcion. This archenemy of Tertullian did not hold to an orthodox view of the Scriptures. Rather, Marcion coined his own compilation of the Scriptures, for he could not come to grips with the notion that the God of the Old Testament was the same God of the New Testament. He made a claim that these two Testaments did not refer to the same God. Although Tertullian was a defender of sound doctrine, he later embraced the Montanist beliefs.
3. The solution Tertullian provided was by inverting the charge of atheism. His apologia noted that Christians did not worship the gods, but did worship the true God, so the accusation of atheism was inaccurate. As for other charges that placed doubt on the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 66.

God-based nature of Jesus: "Not only that, he contends, but the facts of the gospel, including the disappearance of the sun at the time of the Crucifixion, are fully documented in the publicly available historical records of that time period. Tertullian concludes that every fact and every truth point to the divinity of Christ."<sup>49</sup>

4. Tertullian was, in fact, a precursor of fideism. Even though, he pointed to the facts or evidences of the miracles, Bible and the Resurrection, in his faith-based approach, Tertullian "presented in many respects a fairly traditional apologetic [...] But he is most famous for his repudiation of Greek philosophy."<sup>50</sup>
  
1. The next is apostolic father is Origen. Origen was born in Alexandria around 185 A.D., the oldest of seven children. He was saved by his mother during the persecution of Emperor Septimus Severus. He interpreted the Bible so literally that he made himself a eunuch. Origen was taught by his father about truths of the Christian faith. Origen wanted to provide Christians who raised intellectual problems with answers in accordance with Scripture so that they did not go and seek them in the great Gnostic sects.
  
2. The attack on Christianity that Origen faced was to deal with the heresy of Celsus. Origen wrote a response called *Contra Celsum*. Celsus, a Roman philosopher, believed

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<sup>49</sup> Russ L. Bush, ed. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 85.

<sup>50</sup> Kenneth Boa, and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP Books), 339.

that Jesus was born out of an adulterous relationship, that he learned magical arts in Egypt and that He invented the story of His virginal birth.<sup>51</sup>

3. The way Origen faced these attacks was to write a well-reasoned response to the arguments made by Celsus. Robert E. Olson comments: "At the end of *Contra Celsum*, one has the sense that Origen had at least raised Christianity to an intellectual level alongside Celsus' "true doctrine" (Greek philosophy) and made it impossible from then on for anyone to declare Christianity a folk religion fit only for the ignorant and superstitious."<sup>52</sup>

The work of Origen helped Christians achieve an audience among other philosophies and religions of the Roman Empire. The work of Origen was also an attempt to relate the Christian faith with the philosophy that was prevalent in Alexandria. He maintained that the doctrine of the apostles was to be accepted as true and anything that contradicted this doctrine needed to be discarded.<sup>53</sup>

4. Origen could be considered a mixture between classical, evidentialist and a presuppositionalist kind of apologist. Origen held to the view that God was the creator of the universe and the universe gives testimony to His handiwork. In addition, he expressed that the apostles' testimony was a rule of faith, therefore, the testimony of the resurrection was of a truth of great importance to Origen. There is a point of contention in Origen in that he perceived that his doctrine was derived solely from

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<sup>51</sup> Avery Cardinal, Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 42.

<sup>52</sup> Robert E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999), 103.

<sup>53</sup> Justo L. Gonzales, *Historia del Cristianismo*, ed revisada. ed (Miami, FL.: Editorial Unilit, 1994), 96.

Scripture. However, many of his ideas were originally presented by Plato,<sup>54</sup> though in a different context.

### Summary of the Patristic Apologists.

These apologists faced many of the same issues, products of their time and place. Nevertheless, they marked the road that apologists walk today. These early apologists sought to formalize the defense and vindication of the Christian faith by providing proofs for Christianity. That is, they presented a rational basis for the Christian faith. They provided a defense against the attacks on Christianity and gave refutations against a variety of offensive attack made by the Church's opponents. Finally, they attempted to persuade people to embrace Christianity as the most coherent worldview.

Initially, these apologists faced attacks mainly from the Jewish community. The Jews argued that Christianity was a deviant form of Judaism. The response to this argument by the apologists was that the Jewish law were by nature temporary and pointed to the new covenant represented by Jesus Christ. Another claim was that Jesus was not the promised Jewish Messiah. The response of the apologists was to point the Jews to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah and the suffering servant. Finally, the Jews denied the deity of Christ because it was an attack on monotheism. The defense of the apologists was that the Old Testament speaks about the plurality of persons within the unity of the Godhead.

The other arguments against the Christians were from the pagans. Some of the most common accusations were misconceptions about the moral character of the Christians. They were being accused of being irrational. The pagans claimed that the doctrine of the resurrection was absurd. The apologists pointed to the testimony of the eyewitnesses in the Gospels for

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 100.

validation. The pagans stated that there were contradictions in the Scriptures. The apologists used harmonies like *Tatian's Diatessaron* to answer these allegations.<sup>55</sup> The pagans accused them of practicing cannibalism. The apologists pointed to the impeccable testimony of the lives of Christians. The pagans claimed that Christianity would destroy the fabric of Roman society. The apologists pointed to the natural calamities as God's judgments against false worship.

This thesis presents only these four Patristic Era apologists. The contributions of apologists such as Augustine will not be included in this work. This thesis will only mention that Augustine's contribution to apologetics was in line with the classical method of apologetics, with his stringent rational arguments for the existence of God still used in contemporary days.

After the Patristic Era, there was a change in the Roman Empire, decreed by the Emperor Constantine. Christianity was no longer persecuted. In fact, with the Edict of Milan, it became the *Religious Licita*. The conflicts that arose because of this was a merger between the state and the church. Augustine was in the midst of these conflicts. As a Manichean, he clashed often with the powerful Bishop of Milan, Ambrose. Those apologetic confrontations with Ambrose drove Augustine to develop a greater understanding of Christian concepts. In a sense, Ambrose's sometimes contentious exchanges with Augustine cleared the way and made a path for Augustine's conversion.

Augustine tried to unite faith and reason. He stated, "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand."<sup>56</sup> Augustine articulates the phrase "faith seeking understanding."<sup>57</sup> Both faith and reason, according to Augustine, are enabled by God's grace.

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<sup>55</sup> James E. Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict: Negotiating Texts in True and False Prophecy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Richard N. Soulen, *Sacred Scripture: A Short History of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 94.

## Medieval Apologetics

By the Middle Ages, apologists were facing a different scenario. Prior to Medieval apologists, for a period of a several centuries, there was not much apologetic writing. The major issues the church faced were largely unconverted Jews, the rise of Islam and the search for rational grounds for belief.<sup>58</sup> The church enjoyed the control of most of the Western (European) world and this expanded role exposed it to a new series of challenges from within and outside the Church.

One of the most famous apologists of this period was Anselm of Canterbury. Despite his designation, Anselm was born in Italy. After his father's death, he decided to enter a monastery. It seems that Augustine was a great influence in the life of Anselm.<sup>59</sup> He wrote extensively as a Christian scholar, and at the age of forty-three, he set out to prove the existence of God. Anselm wrote the *Monologion* where he denoted arguments akin to the cosmological argument for God's existence similar to those expressed by Saint Augustine. It is important to note that: "...God is not merely the cause of the forms of being--but of being itself. Thus he formulates a distinctly biblical form of the cosmological argument in contrast to the Platonic or Aristotelian forms of the argument."<sup>60</sup>

His next work was the *Proslogion*, written in 1078. Here is where the famous "ontological argument" was formulated. Anselm received a critique of an earlier work from a

<sup>57</sup> See, Dewey J. Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga: An Introduction to Reformed Epistemology* (Albany, NY: State University Press, 1991), 57.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth Boa, and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP), 17.

<sup>59</sup> Russ L. Bush, ed. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics: A.D. 100-1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 238.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 239-240.

monk by the name of Gaunlio. Anselm provided a rebuttal of the critique, and this provided the exchange that was recorded in his work. This line of argumentation, regarded as the first such in ontological form, is usually preferred by idealist philosophers.<sup>61</sup>

The other great apologist of this era was Thomas Aquinas. One of his most-acclaimed works was *Summa Contra Gentiles*. This was a work that was written to help the Spanish clergy with the Muslim philosophers that were presenting challenges to Christianity. The other work for which Thomas Aquinas is highly acclaimed is his *Summa Theologica*. In both of these works, Aquinas explains the "Five Ways" or the five arguments for the existence of God. These are a form of the "cosmological argument" for the existence of God. Aquinas understood that these arguments were not an absolute vindication of the Christian God. Rather, Aquinas understood that these arguments can proof that there exists a higher being.

### Reformation Apologetics

The apologetic work of this time is directed to the correction of the chaos provided by Roman Catholicism of the time. The Reformers saw the atrocities being committed by the Catholic Church, both theologically and socially. This ignited the flame for a reform of theology and society. The apologists of this period submerged into Scripture and thus defined much of the orthodox theology of the Protestant Reformation. It is important to mention the two most dominant theologians of this time: Martin Luther and John Calvin. Their contributions to theology have served as foundations for many apologists, especially to those who live and develop a ministry in the Reformed sector of theology.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

## The 17th and 18th Centuries

The 17th century gave birth to Modern Science, and the 18th century gave birth to the Enlightenment (Modernism). These two periods also gave rise to influential apologists. During the Enlightenment, it was also called the Age of Reason. This notion undermined the authority of the Church and the Bible. As it was perceived then, Man had opened his eyes and could now be free of the myths and fables of religion.<sup>62</sup> Immanuel Kant was a person that influenced many readers and followers to reject the supernatural. This led to biblical criticism and the undermining of the authority of the Bible. Prior to this period, there was a predominantly Christian worldview, augmented by the near-universal power of the Church. However, the Enlightenment brought a spirit of skepticism that fueled the hearts of many in the church and paved the way for a growing number of people to engage in apologetics.

The growing number of contentious issues that the Church had to deal with inspired more men of God to get involved in apologetics. One of the most prevalent issues was the advent of the "postmodern" movement. This worldview advocated relativism, and this conceptual framework undermined nearly every aspect of the Christian faith. This movement also provided for the emergence of pluralism. These two philosophies or ideas are just some of the issues that contemporary apologists are still facing in our time.

## Contemporary Apologetics

Apologetics has made an impact in the early part of the 21st century. As Cardinal Dulles explains, "In recent years, apologetics has witnessed a strong revival, particularly among

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<sup>62</sup> It is interesting to note that every time there is a paradigm shift, God places men who will present an *apologia* and speak through them to the world. In every historical change that has been surveyed in this work, the reader can perceive that there is always a new form of attack against Christianity. Then, God raises his apologists that serve as a catalyst towards the salvation of His church. As Martin Luther is often quoted, "When God build a church, Satan constructs a cathedral next to it."

Evangelicals in North America. They continue to debate among themselves about the methods and goals of apologetics."<sup>63</sup> There are several apologists who have elevated themselves to the ranks of historical apologists. They achieved this position because they were bold enough to provide answers to thorny questions posed in a postmodern world, valuable contributions because the postmodern movement has provided many a challenge to Christians. In the twentieth century, the church experienced a paradigm shift, in general by adopting many aspects of postmodern beliefs. The idea expressed in postmodernism about the relative nature of concepts, such as truth, has engendered a slippery footing for Christianity. Gene Edward Veith comments:

According to a recent poll, 66 percent of Americans believe [that] "there is no such thing as absolute truth." Among young adults, the percentage is even higher: 72 percent of those between eighteen and twenty-five do not believe absolute exists. [...] Moreover, the poll goes on to show that 53 percent of those who call themselves *evangelical Christians* believe that there are no absolutes. This means that the *majority* of those who say that they believe in the authority of the Bible and know Christ as their Savior nevertheless agree that "there is no such thing as absolute truth."<sup>64</sup>

These are the facts of the contemporary world. It is of no wonder that God has raised a group of apologist to confront and provide coherent answers to these and many other issues. This work will survey some of these apologists and provide some of the reasons for doing apologetics. This will be accomplished by selecting a few of the most recent prominent apologists, that is, only those apologists born in the early twentieth century will be addressed for the sake of simplicity. There are many apologists that could be mentioned, however, in this thesis, only the apologists that are in North America will be taken into consideration.

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<sup>63</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 365.

<sup>64</sup> Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Irvine, CA: Crossway Books, 1994), 16-17.

1. Norman Geisler (1932- ). He is the founder of the Southern Evangelical Seminary and is perhaps the most influential writer in Evangelical apologetics. Dr. Geisler is a graduate of Wheaton College and holds a doctorate of Philosophy from Loyola University in Chicago. Dr. Geisler has debated many atheists in the past.
  2. The attacks that Dr. Geisler most often encounter seem to be skepticism and atheism. His approach to doing apologetics is to present evidence for the existence of truth and then from there he sets the stage for the existence of God. He uses the classical arguments for the existence of God in all of his debates.
  3. The way that Dr. Geisler addresses the issue of atheist and agnostics alike is by developing twelve evidences that show Christianity to be true.<sup>65</sup> He does this as a method using logic and the classical arguments for God's existence.
  4. Dr. Norman Geisler is a classical apologist who follows in the intellectual footsteps of Thomas Aquinas.
1. Dr. William Lane Craig is perhaps the best-known apologist in the twentieth century. A research professor at Talbot School of Theology, he holds two Ph.D. degrees, one in theology and another in Philosophy.
  2. The attack that has been more predominant in Dr. Craig's ministry is that of the "New Atheists."<sup>66</sup> These antagonists of the Christian faith have sought to confront and debate Christians throughout the last part of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first. The "New Atheist" agenda is to ridicule and undermine any Christian that comes their way. Among the "New Atheists" is Richard Dawkins and the late

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<sup>65</sup> Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *12 Points that Show Christianity is True*, (Video lecture, Charlotte, NC), [www.impactapologetics.com](http://www.impactapologetics.com)

<sup>66</sup> This was a comment presented to the author of this thesis in a private conversation.

Christopher Hitchens. These are two of the so-called "Four Horseman of the Apocalypse," a group with the sole purpose to denigrate and ridicule Christian in academic circles.

3. As Christians left the world academia, a new breed of Christian philosophers are making an entrance in the intellectual departments of many universities. One of these intellectuals is Dr. Craig. He has debated many of the "New Atheists" and some of them even refused to go one-on-one with Dr. Craig. The reason is that Dr. Craig has crafted an approach to present Christianity that is almost flawless. He does this by presenting a resurgence of the classical Kalam cosmological argument. In fact, it is not only the Kalam argument, but a well-crafted and logically-sequential group of four arguments, including a version of William Paley's teleological argument.
4. Dr. William Lane Craig is considered a classical apologist. However, he does use the evidence for the resurrection as an evidentialist would.
  1. Dr. Ravi Zacharias is the founder and president of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries based in Nacross, Georgia. Dr. Zacharias is a native-born Indian, who emigrated to the United States in the last part of the twentieth century. Out of all the apologists mentioned in this work, perhaps Dr. Zacharias is the most pastoral of all.
  2. The challenges that Dr. Zacharias had to deal with were the influential aspects of Eastern Religions and the issues of the "New Atheists."
  3. The way that Dr. Zacharias has dealt with these issues is by presenting logical arguments that would force his opponents to confess the inconsistencies of their worldviews. A key speech for Dr. Zacharias was a lecture given at the *Veritas Forum* in Harvard. This gave way for the writing of one of his most influential book, *Can*

*Men Live Without God.* In this book, Dr. Zacharias explains the steps to find the truth and the consistency of the Christian worldview.

4. Dr. Ravi Zacharias uses the Presuppositional and the Evidential method of apologetics.

### Summary

The apologist mentioned in this chapter defended the faith as the new attacks on Christianity surfaced. This historical survey shows that most of the apologists were defending first and then vindicating Christianity. This shows that God has from the beginning of time provided the tools necessary to maintain His teachings and words. There is no doubt that apologetics and the mission of the church go hand in hand. However, there is a slight difference among the two. The mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel for the salvation of the soul and apologetics clears the way for the Holy Spirit to do just that.

The issues apologists face are continually changing. The issues the earliest apologists had are different from the ones they face today. These early apologist pleaded for civil equality. They claimed that Christians were model citizens and many times, even better than the Roman citizens. When Christians were unjustly accused, the apologists pointed to their impeccable behavior, thus providing one of the most important tools in apologetics. That is, the apologist's personal testimony as evidenced by their actions. These men gave their lives for the Gospel, and this spoke more powerfully than any philosophical argument they could have addressed.

The next period in apologetic history pointed its attacks at the incoherence of the Roman system of religion. The neo-platonic philosophy was placed against Christianity, and the apologist demonstrated that their faith surpassed, in many ways, the Roman's philosophy. The Middle Ages were a period that apologists pointed the Jews to the person of Jesus Christ as the

fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. Furthermore, Christian apologists went head-to-head with Muslim philosophers.

The advent of the Enlightenment gave birth to skepticism and apologists shifted their energies to combat that worldview. In the nineteenth century, apologists dealt with an era characterized by the widespread emergence of science. This era, as a result of the Enlightenment, was skeptical at anything that was not scientific. Matters of faith were considered subjective and with no scientific proof. Therefore, the miracles, the signs, and the authority of the Bible were not taken seriously. Apologists provided means for explaining the faith in a logical and coherent matter.

Finally, the twentieth century was a period of religious plurality and religious relativism. Truth was no longer considered as objective truth. Instead, truth was subjectively discovered or defined. Here the apologists, as their peers did in the past, began to show that this wrong notion of truth was incoherent. Many apologists began to endeavor in the field of philosophy and religion and have become intellectually-capable of addressing the most stringent attacks to Christianity. This era of relativism is often called the postmodern movement. Apologists have studied this movement and presented successful challenges to it.

In conclusion, in this chapter the reader can see that the task of the apologist has been a continual battle. The fact is, this battle will never end. That is the reason why Christians must learn and be engaged by apologetics to some degree in their ministry. There is always going to be challenges to the Christian faith. The question to ask is: will there be those who will answer these challenges for the glory of God? Apologists of every historical era have a common set of threads. Apologists have looked at the "spirit" of their times and challenged it. They looked for their challenge to Christianity. They have analyzed their opponents and then provided for

coherent answers. In the same manner, apologists today must analyze their challenges and then provide coherent answers.

## CHAPTER 4

**Evaluation of contemporary apologetics methods**

And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that ye are very religious in all respects. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.

Acts 17:22-23

The author of this thesis has chosen the four most popular apologetic methods used in contemporary Christianity. They are the Classical, Presuppositional, Evidential and Fideist. There are many other approaches that could be considered. However, these four methods, for the purpose of simplicity, are a concise venue to continue with the work. Why are there so many methods for doing apologetics? The answer, as Mark Hanna explains, is that: "The answer lies (at least partially) in the range of possible answers that might be given to a series of fundamental questions. These questions have been called *meta-apologetics* since they are questions about the "methods, concepts, and perspectives of apologetics."<sup>1</sup>

Edward Carnell elaborates this point by saying, "There is no 'official' or 'normative' approach to apologetics. At least I have never found one. The approach is governed by the climate of the times. This means, as it were, that apologists must play it by ear."<sup>2</sup> Beilby makes a good point where he says, "The case for Christianity will be based, not on a single argument, but the sum total of evidence available from each and every aspect of human experience."<sup>3</sup> In the next few pages of this work, evaluation of the methods selected will delineate the selected approaches to apologetics, along with their strong and weak points.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Carnell, *The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1960), 5.

<sup>3</sup> James Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 110.

### Classical Method

This method of apologetics is said to have been the first approach done by the earliest apologists of the Christian faith. Dr. Geisler explains, "The roots of classical apologetics are found in some second-and third century apologists as well."<sup>4</sup> This method employs theistic arguments for the existence of God and then it advocates the rationality of the Christian faith. There is a difference between the classical method of apologetics and the evidential method of apologetics. The difference is laid in the use of evidences. For the classical apologist, it is essential to establish the fact of the existence of God as its base premise. If this is not established as a foundation, then there is no case for any miracle or supernatural activity such as prophecy.<sup>5</sup>

The *Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* explains: "Virtually all forms of classical apologetics operate from the evidential basis. That is, each system holds to natural revelation to varying degrees."<sup>6</sup> For the classical apologist, the case for Christianity is made once the existence of God is accepted. Apologists who favor this method are also classified as "Thomists."<sup>7</sup> This is so because, "Much like Thomas Aquinas, they do not believe that accepting the existence of a personal and all-powerful God is a precondition for entering the discussion."<sup>8</sup> This seems to be contradictory, but it is not. In one sense, these apologists will make their case if God is accepted. However, on the other hand, they understand that their position does not equate

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<sup>4</sup> Norman Geisler. "Classical method" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 154.

<sup>5</sup> This seems to follow logically. However, the Presuppositional apologist will argue that this commonality is just an illusion. This point will be addressed further ahead in this work.

<sup>6</sup> Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner, eds., "*Classical Apologetics*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*. (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 64.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

to the God of the Bible who is all-powerful and personal. The most the classical apologist can do is to present plausible arguments for the existence of a higher being.

Dr. Ravi Zacharias mentions that the classical method of apologetics has its benefits in terms of tradition and ease of use. However, this method does have its flaws. "First, we can work backward from creation to conclude, by induction, what God the Creator is like. This is the route that has been taken by classical apologetics and is not without difficulties."<sup>9</sup> The fact is that the classical method of apologetics is a "top-down" approach because it argues from the existence of God to the rest of creation. "Evidence for the existence of God is offered apart from, or before, the special revelation of the Bible. These evidences, such as the argument from design, the arguments offered by Thomas Aquinas, and other arguments, are viewed as valid and understandable, even to the skeptic, because the skeptic is using the reasonable senses that God provided every human being."<sup>10</sup>

Classic apologetics stresses rational arguments to prove the existence of God. Therefore, the revelation of Scripture is not the primary focus of this method. There is an appeal to human reason, as prescribed by Blaise Pascal, to fill "the God-shape hole" in the human soul. "What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he in vain tries to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith We Defend*. Reprint ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 232.

<sup>10</sup> Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner, eds., "*Classical Apologetics*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 64.

<sup>11</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, 10.148.

This idea may have well originated with the Bishop of Hippo, Saint Augustine. He wrote that humans are created with a sense of the creator and that they cannot find rest until the search for God is found to the soul's satisfaction. "Yet, man would praise You, he who is but a particle in Your creation. You awake us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless 'til they find rest in You."<sup>12</sup>

*Strong Points of the Classic Method of Apologetics*

This method of apologetics understands the importance of reason in the task of apologetics. As Dr. Norman Geisler says, "Unless the law of non-contradiction holds, then there is not even the most minimal possibility of meaning nor any hope for establishing truth. As a negative test for truth at least, the principle of non-contradiction is absolutely essential. Without this law, truth cannot be distinguished from falsity; all is equally true and false, which is to say nothing can be true."<sup>13</sup>

It is notable to mention that the classical method of apologetics is internally consistent. That is, the same method to perform the validity of the system can be applied to the classical method, and it would prove to be coherent and reasonable, much the same as the message of God as the God of reason and truth. To minister to the educated and intellectually-oriented, the classic apologist will emphasize the use of deductive logic for three reasons: "First, it is an indispensable tool for checking the apologist's own arguments to make sure they are constructed properly. [...] Second, logic is a powerful instrument for exposing problems in arguments used against Christian beliefs. [...] Third, the emphasis on logic is helpful in commending the claims

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<sup>12</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1.

<sup>13</sup> Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 40.

of Christ to intelligent non-Christians."<sup>14</sup> Another strong point of this approach is that, at its core, the classical method has a common ground with the unbeliever. This common ground is reason.

#### *Weak Points of the Classical Method of Apologetics*

One of the weak points of the classical method of apologetics is that the arguments presented for the validity of the system, although plausible, do not conclusively offer proof about the God of the Bible. The best these arguments will do is to pose the belief of deism. Many of the classical arguments will demonstrate that it is reasonable to prove and thus believe in a higher being, but a person must make a leap of faith towards the one true God. Dr. Boa states, "The classical method does not address the personal dimensions of knowledge and beliefs."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, there is an overemphasis on reason, making God subject to reason and logic.

#### The Presuppositional Method of Apologetics

Dr. Norman Geisler defines Presuppositional apologetics as "the apologetic system that defends Christianity from the departure point of certain basic presuppositions. The apologist presupposes the truth of Christianity from the departure point of certain basic presuppositions."<sup>16</sup> This school of thought believes "It is important to distinguish between ideas we have prior to the inquiry and those we gain in the course of the inquiry."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, this method of apologetics, "...may be understood in the light of a distinction common in epistemology, or the theory of knowledge. No one, of course, embarks on an investigation with an empty mind. If

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<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP, 2006), 128-129.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>16</sup> Norman Geisler. "Presuppositional Apologetics" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 607-608.

<sup>17</sup> W. C. Campbell-Jack, Gavin J. McGrath, and C. Stephen Evans, eds., "Presuppositional Apologetics" in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 575-578.

indeed we had done no previous thinking, nothing would motivate us to seek further information.." <sup>18</sup> Dr. Van Til defined apologetics as: "The vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophies of life."<sup>19</sup>

The Presuppositional apologetics method has many differences when compared to other methods. For example, this method is different from the popular Classical apologetics because it does not hold to the validity of the conventional evidences for the existence of God and/or the historical evidences for Christianity as the primary means for knowledge. It also differs from these two conventional and historical evidences in that Presuppositional apologetics establishes that every person ultimately holds to a predetermined set of beliefs and these beliefs shape the person's overarching worldview. A worldview is a set of ideas that help a person interpret reality, making it like a set of glasses where a person sees the realities of the world. If the lenses are faulty, then the perception of the world is distorted. Dr. Ronald H. Nash defines the concept of worldview as, "A conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality."<sup>20</sup>

There are several kinds of Presuppositional apologetics and they can be used in many different settings. "Because Presuppositional apologetics is not limited to a rigid method or set of arguments, but instead is concerned with the foundations of human thought, it is very adaptable

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<sup>18</sup> W. C. Campbell-Jack, Gavin J. McGrath, and C. Stephen Evans, eds., "Presuppositional Apologetics" in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 576.

<sup>19</sup> Cornelius Van Til. *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed., ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 24.

and can be applied in very different fields: the arts, politics, ethics, philosophy, counseling, evangelism, mercy ministry, hermeneutics, theology, etc."<sup>21</sup>

The late Dr. Cornelius Van Til, from Princeton, held to one particular view of apologetics called the Revelational view of Presuppositional apologetics, while Dr. Gordon Clark views this method as Rational. Dr. Francis Schaefer has been categorized as espousing *Practical apologetics*. Finally, Dr. Edward J. Carnell based his apologetics on the Presuppositional position of Systematic Consistency.<sup>22</sup>

As previously explained, there are several approaches within the Presuppositional apologetics methodology. Cornelius Van Til often used the Revelational method of Presuppositional apologetics. This method for doing apologetics explains that the origin of the apologetic presentation must be with the Bible or the truths of the Christian faith. In addition, this approach "Believes that the Holy Bible is the core and center of all truth, and thus, without this shared belief, the listener and the apologist will never come to any commonality."<sup>23</sup> Another approach is the Rational method of Presuppositional apologetic, a method that explains that all other worldviews are incoherent and that only the Christian faith is not. This is primarily derived from the law of non-contradiction. There is a difference between this approach and the Revelational approach. The difference is found in its truth and proofs. "Christian theologians such as Gordon Clark believe that the Scriptures, along with the laws of rational thought, are the tests of consistency. A rational presuppositionist holds that only Christianity is internally

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<sup>21</sup> George Thomas Kurian and James D., III Smith, eds., "*Cornelius Van Til*," *The Encyclopedia of Christian Literature* (vol. 1). 2 vols. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 616.

<sup>22</sup> Norman Geisler. "Presuppositional apologetics" *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 607-608.

<sup>23</sup> Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner, eds., "*Presuppositional Apologetics*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*. (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 66.

consistent and logical, and; therefore, the listener must hold to a belief in logic before a discussion can bear any fruit."<sup>24</sup>

This approach within the presuppositionalist method was defended by Gordon Clark. He was an opponent to Van Til's Revelational approach. Dr. Clark convinced of the Rational approach, as explained by James Beilby, insisted that, "What the Bible says, God has spoken."<sup>25</sup> Beilby continues to explain, "One must accept the starting points or axioms of Christianity [...]. As in geometry, axioms are never deduced, but are assumed without proof. Clark asserts that one can know that Christianity is true because it alone is logically consistent and all competing worldviews or philosophies are logically inconsistent."<sup>26</sup>

The Practical method of Presuppositional apologetics presents a case for the Christian faith as the worldview that is coherently livable. One of the proponents of this approach was the late Dr. Francis Schaefer. Dr. Geisler writes: "In this sense, it uses unlivability as a test for the falsity of non-Christian systems and livability as a test for the truth of Christianity."<sup>27</sup>

Finally, there is the Systematical method of Presuppositional apologetics. In this approach, the apologists, such as John Carnell, explain that the system must include all the facts for its credibility. The system must be able to answer a person's fundamental needs. In this approach, only Christianity is able to sustain the test of coherence and internal consistency. The only system that thus passes these criteria is Christianity and, by the rules of logic, all other systems are incoherent and false.

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<sup>24</sup> Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner, eds., "*Presuppositional Apologetics*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*. (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 66.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon H Clark, *In Defense of Theology* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1984), 32-33.

<sup>26</sup> James Beilby in, *Christian Apologetics: an Anthology of Primary Sources*. Khaldoun A., and Chad V. Meister, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.), 34.

<sup>27</sup> Norman Geisler. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 607.

*Strong Points of the Presuppositional Method of Apologetics*

The strongest point of the Presuppositional apologist contribution is that they have made a case to bridge the huge chasm between the Christians and their opponents with regards to their sum total of beliefs. Their epistemological differences guide these two poles to different conclusions. The Presuppositional apologist will critique an opponent's worldview and point out the inconsistencies within their view.

The strong point of this view is that this method holds a high regard for the authority of Scripture. Presuppositionalists recognize that the effects of sin have hindered the ability of the non-Christian to have a coherent worldview. Furthermore, presuppositionalists emphasize the need for the apologist to understand the person's noetic structure. This is essential for the apologist because the comprehension of this fact will drive the apologist to gather a set of answers that will aid the effort of persuading his or her opponent. In other words, the apologist must understand the epistemological foundations of the other person in order to present a successful *apologia*.

The Presuppositionalist apologetic agrees that no argument will ultimately convince a person. Rather, they hold that every premise is founded in the fact that humans are created in the image of God. Although Sean McDowell is not a presuppositionalist, he does explain very clearly this notion, "When I teach apologetics, I often find that many Christians are looking for a silver bullet, an argument that will convince every skeptic, defeat every critique, or win every debate. But as I regularly share with these people, no such silver bullet exists."<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, any meaningful conversation must understand that there is a rational ground for meaning and morality, and that the foundation is God himself. The opponents of Christianity

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<sup>28</sup> Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation: a Biblical and Culturally Relevant Approach to Talking About God* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 178.

usually negate this fact. However, this places the responsibility in their shoulders to provide a coherent answer for the origin of meaning and morality. Often, the non-Christian will evade the true meaning of this fact by adjudicating the origins to an evolutionary scheme. The problem with this notion is that the person holding this view would have to argue *ad infinitum* and ultimately beg the question of the true origin of meaning and morality.

In comparison with other methods of apologetics, the Presuppositional method provides the grounds for a transcendental argument that applies in any context. Dr. Boa explains this concept even further, "...[T]he transcendental argument is applicable in any context and in relation to any question. Classical and evidentialist apologetics require some familiarity with specific philosophical arguments or with various bits of information, and tend to plow over the same ground repeatedly."<sup>29</sup>

#### *Weak Points of the Presuppositional Method of Apologetics*

According to Dr. William Lane Craig, the weak point of the presuppositional approach is that it begs the question at its foundation. He claims that the presuppositional method of apologetics is flawed on the basis of its philosophical integrity. He states: "Where Presuppositionalism muddies the waters is in its apologetic methodology. As commonly understood, presuppositionalism is guilty of a logical howler: it commits the informal fallacy of *petito principii*, or begging the question, for it advocates presupposing the truth of Christian theism in order to prove Christian theism."<sup>30</sup>

Another charge against Presuppositional apologetics is that it has a narrow view of philosophical and evidential arguments. As Kenneth Boa explains: "Reformed [presuppositional]

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<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Boa, and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP), 329.

<sup>30</sup> Steven B. Cowan, ed. *Five Views On Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 232.

apologists rightly stress the importance of challenging the philosophy of fact presupposed by non-Christians. However, they overstate the case when they maintain that facts alone cannot persuade non-Christians to embrace a Christian world view and faith."<sup>31</sup> The problem of the unbeliever is not that the information about Christianity is not understood, but that the suppression of the truth is accepted rather than rejected by the unbeliever.

### Evidential Method

This method of doing apologetics is focused at using evidence for the validity of an apologetic method. This method uses many ways for its truth claims meaning that there are different types of evidential apologetics. Dr. Norman Geisler explains that the evidentialists are divided into the following categories: rational, historical, archeological, experiential, and prophetic.<sup>32</sup> He explains the differences in these apologetic methods, saying that: "While the use of evidence is not unique to evidential apologetics, the manner in which it is used is unique. Both classical apologists and some evidentialist use theistic arguments. However, for the evidentialist, establishing the existence of God is not a logically prior and necessary step. It is simply one strand in the overall web of evidence that supports Christianity."<sup>33</sup>

There are three main ideas in the categories expressed previously by Dr. Geisler:

First, since human beings have been created as rational beings and cannot commit themselves to what they believe to be false, rational and evidential arguments for the faith are a crucial element of an apologetic for Christianity. Second, there are profound intellectual arguments for the faith that require a well-reasoned, well-supported response. Third, rational and evidential arguments can be very effective

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<sup>31</sup> Kenneth, Boa, and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP, 2006), 331.

<sup>32</sup> See. Norman Geisler. "Evidential apologetics" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 42-43.

<sup>33</sup> Norman Geisler. "Evidential apologetics" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 42-43.

in overcoming peoples' objection to the faith and, at times, in encouraging people to take a step of faith itself.<sup>34</sup>

The classical and evidential methods of apologetics share many similarities. The main distinction is found in the use of the historical evidences. It is important to note, as Dr. Geisler explains, that: "Evidentialists operate as attorneys who combine evidences into an overall brief in defense of the position, trusting that the combined weight will present a persuasive case."<sup>35</sup> And yet, there are some that do not give much credit to this approach. Ken Ham explains, "Evidential apologetics is actually a modern outworking of classical apologetics. In fact, many classical apologists appeal to evidential thinking on certain arguments and vice versa."<sup>36</sup> In the same line of thought, "...[E]vidential apologetic is technically a subgenre of classical apologetics,[...]. Even though many evidential forms coincide with classical apologetics, the evidentialist does not believe that proving the existence of God is necessary."<sup>37</sup> James K. Beilby explains, "...[T]he hallmark of evidentialism is its emphasis on rational arguments and evidences."<sup>38</sup> Beilby believes that, the classical, historical, and the cumulative-case apologists fall in the category of evidential apologetics.<sup>39</sup> The evidentialist is defined in a similar manner of using logic and reason to appeal its case.

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<sup>34</sup> James Beilby in, *Christian Apologetics: an Anthology of Primary Sources*. Khaldoun A., and Chad V. Meister, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 31-32.

<sup>35</sup> Norman Geisler. "Types of Apologetics" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy. 1999), 42.

<sup>36</sup> Ken Ham & Bodie Hodge and general editors., *How do we Know the Bible is True?* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012), 75.

<sup>37</sup> Ed Hindson, Ed and Ergun Caner, eds., "*Evidential Apologetics*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 65.

<sup>38</sup> James Beilby in, *Christian Apologetics: an Anthology of Primary Sources*. Khaldoun A., and Chad V. Meister, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.), 31.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-34.

### *Strong Points of the Evidential Method of Apologetics*

The evidential method of apologetics acts as an advocate for Christianity. This method compiles many evidences that point to a verdict. As in a legal court, the evidence will tilt the balance from a low level of credibility to high level of credibility, which is what the evidential approach does with Christianity.

### *Weak Points of the Evidential Method of Apologetics*

Evidentialist approaches often overestimate the scope of human reason and underestimate the effects of sin in humanity. The effects of sin or what many called "the noetic effects of sin" are a barrier to the evidentialist methodology.<sup>40</sup> Another claim is that: "Empirical evidences are interpreted through presuppositions and the framework of one's worldview and therefore should be offered only after the philosophical considerations have been addressed."<sup>41</sup>

### The Fideist Method of Apologetics

This method of apologetics focuses on the experiential aspect of the faith. Its definition is derived as follows: "From the Latin word *fide*, *fideism* means "faith," or faith-ism. A Fideist, therefore, is one who holds the view that one comes to belief in God on the basis of faith alone, in the absence of or contrary to reason."<sup>42</sup> Dr. Douglas Groothuis says, "Fideism is an attempt to protect Christian faith against the assaults of reason by means of intellectual insulation and

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<sup>40</sup> For further understanding of the Noetic effects of sin. See. Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of How Sin Affects Our Thinking* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> H. Wayne House and Joseph M. Holden. *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), Chart 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ed Hindson, Ed and Ergun Caner, eds., "*Fideism*" in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 224.

isolation."<sup>43</sup> On a different note, there are some who would advocate that Fideism stresses a difference between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith. Usually, this concept is defended by liberal scholars.

All these radically liberal theologians had two things in common. One, they no longer saw the New Testament as a reliable historical document, as the apostles saw it when they conscientiously recorded the miraculous acts of Jesus, including His bodily resurrection. Two, they posited a Jesus of faith and a Jesus of history. The former laid the foundation for fideism.<sup>44</sup>

There are different types of Fideism. Some argue that Fideism is simply blind faith and no objective facts or evidences are needed in order to have faith. "Fideism covers a group of possible views, extending from (1) that of blind faith, which denies to reason any capacity whatsoever to reach the truth, or to make it plausible, and which bases all certitude on a complete and unquestioning adherence to some revealed or accepted truths, to (2) that of making faith prior to reason."<sup>45</sup>

The term Fideism has its roots at the turn of the twentieth century. This is not to say that prior to the twentieth century there was no perception of this concept. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* states that it is "A theological term coined at the turn of the century [...]. Fideists [...] are said to base their understanding of the Christian faith upon religious experience alone, understanding reason to be incapable of establishing either faith's certitude or credibility."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 60.

<sup>44</sup> William Dembski and Thomas Schirrmacher, eds., *Though Minded Christianity: Honoring the Legacy of John Warwick Montgomery* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 505.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Henry Popkin, *The History of Skepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), xxii introduction.

<sup>46</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed. "Fideism" In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 2nd ed, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 451.

As a counterpoint in the historical birth of this position, Kenneth Boa says, "...[I]ts roots extend back into the early church. The church father most commonly cited as a precursor to fideism was Tertullian."<sup>47</sup> This early church father exclaimed: "What indeed has Athens with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from the 'porch of Solomon.'[...] Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition!"<sup>48</sup>

*Strong Points of the Fideist Method of Apologetics*

This approach for doing apologetics is obviously more focused on the subjective experience of the individual. Other methods of apologetics may over-emphasize the use of rationality and disregard the experiential aspect of a person's noetic structure. Apologetics is often seen as a purely intellectual discipline by fideists. Nevertheless, the Fideist method does not hinge its foundation solely on the powers of the human intellect. There is a principal focus with this methodology, and it is the person of Jesus Christ. There is a focus towards a relationship with Jesus and not a relational base on or with the intellect.

The aim of Fideism is not to rely on arguments, philosophy, theology, or religion. The advocates of this method hold to a high Christology and believe that an apologetic method must direct the person to encounter individually the reality of Jesus Christ. The Fideist is correct in pointing out that rational and logical arguments are not an absolute testimony to the existence of a transcendent God. They are correct to believe that no amount of evidence or reason is enough for a person to believe in God. The value of this method in apologetics is that the experience

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<sup>47</sup> Kenneth, Boa, and Robert M. Bowman Jr. *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: IVP, 2006), 339.

<sup>48</sup> Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heresies*, 7; cf. Apology, 46. Cited in C. Marvin Pate, *From Plato to Jesus: What Does Philosophy Have to Do With Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI : Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 150.

could be a great testimony for the validity of the Christian belief system. This is a subjective approach, and it does present a certain emotional value and appeal, especially in contemporary times.

*Weak Points of the Fideist Method of Apologetics*

The foundation of human knowledge is that it should be rational. The Fideist method of apologetics must assert to this fact. Nevertheless, the anchor position of this system against human reason undermines the foundation for Fideism itself. That is, if rational arguments are not important, then why would anyone be a coherent Fideist? Fideism at its core presupposes that it is a rational approach to Christianity. However, the strength of its roots relies solely on or is only as strong as the person's feelings. Faith that is founded on facts does not need to rely on just the basis of a person's feelings. A rational defense of fideism seems to be conflicting because it uses reason to prove that it does not need reason for its validity.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Noetic approach to apologetics methods**

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:10-13

### Definition of the Terms

This thesis' goal is to come up with a taxonomical tool for apologetic methods. This tool is developed in order to facilitate the apologist in the task of presenting or defending the Christian faith. There are apologetic methods that will not provide a satisfactory answer or defense when taken into consideration the epistemology framework of an individual. Therefore, the tool presented in this thesis is a possible answer to this problem. A tool that would evaluate the person's best gateway is a tool that will facilitate the road for the apologists to complete their calling in defending and properly articulating the Christian faith.

There is an attempt to do this in the book *Faith has its Reasons*, by Dr. Boa. However, Dr. Boa does not provide a system where the different types of inquiries could be categorized and addressed. Rather, he provides a plethora of questions and few possible apologetics-based arguments. The questions being asked, as well as the apologetic method(s), must be categorized and matched as closely as possible in order to provide an effective apologetic answer. However, Dr. Boa only provides a taxonomy of apologetic methods with several arguments. Regardless, a person must understand that an argument is not a method. There is confusion between an

argument that is preferred by a specific method and the method(s) that could address the argument.

In the book *Faith has its Reasons*, Dr. Boa does not categorize the questions being asked to the apologist. There is simply no explanation or categories of these questions in his book. Are these questions philosophical, moral, biblical, or experiential? Are there more questions besides the ones he presented in his book? Of course there are. Therefore, the answers to these questions create a fundamental basis on which to develop the best apologetic method to address each one. The author of this thesis seeks provide not only a taxonomy for apologetics methods, but also a taxonomy of the questions or challenges being made to the apologist.

The problem with the table in Dr. Boa's book is that it is too vague and does not really address the difference between those who are already believers and need to have their faith strengthened, and those who are not believers launching an abrasive attack or genuinely having legitimate questions about the Christian faith. There is a main difference between Dr. Boa's table and the work deployed in this thesis. The difference is that the tool in this thesis systematizes the questions, inquiries or attacks and then proceeds to direct the person to the best gateway for the Gospel by addressing the heart and the mind in the form of the apologetic method(s).

There was an attempt to do a taxonomy of apologetic methods done by Bernard Ramm in his book *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*.<sup>1</sup> However, it too was limited in scope and fell short of what this author believes is a truly useful evaluation instrument,

It is the understanding of this thesis that a gap clearly exists in the literature relating to apologetic methods. In the process of doing apologetics, apologists go from the definition of apologetics directly to the apologetic methodology. However, there are instances where an

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<sup>1</sup> See Barnard Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House: Literary Licensing, LLC, 1961).

apologetic method is irrelevant for the person who is seeking specific answers. The majority of apologists hold to a particular method of apologetics and then their approach is to give evidences or answer claims within their own particular structure, a form of "one size fits all" thinking. This often proves to be inefficient as the person making the argument against Christianity is not satisfied with the answer.

The tool in this thesis helps identify the path that best suits the concerns or intrigues for an audience. Dr. McGrath is correct when he states that:

The real issue concerns identifying the gateway that works best for our audiences. For some that gateway will be evidence-based reasoning. Apologists have long recognized the importance of demonstrating the reasonableness of faith, and this remains an important task for contemporary apologetics. Other audiences, however, will use different criteria. Some will not see the question of the truth of the gospel as being of primary importance. For them, the question is whether it works. When engaging a pragmatic audience, the apologist will need to emphasize the difference the Christian faith makes in life. Other audiences will see morality as a key issue: Will the gospel help morality work out what the good life looks like, and help me live it?<sup>2</sup> [...] ...it is very important to understand the different audiences we engage. Each has its own distinct identity, reflected in the particular concerns or difficulties it may experience concerning the Christian faith and the gateways that they may be used to connect with it.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. McGrath touches on the heart of the apologetics methodology issue. The perception among different persons is different according to several variables. The author of this thesis has determined that in order to proceed from a definition of apologetics directly to the method, as currently done by many, there must be an intermediate process or tool in order to accurately assess the correct apologetic method. This is the Noetic Apologetic method, tool, or process. In order to properly comprehend this tool or method, the reader must understand what is meant by the word "noetic."

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<sup>2</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 2011), 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

Dr. Ronald Nash explains that “The word *Noetic* comes from the Greek verb *noeo*. This verb means to [“understand” or to “think”] and its noun means [“intelligence” or “understanding].”<sup>4</sup> Dr. Nash continues to explain that everyone has a Noetic structure and that this structure is the sum total of a person's beliefs. The objects of beliefs are propositions and they are either true or false. Furthermore, it encompasses the relationship of those beliefs among each other and their degrees of certainty, firmness, and conviction.

Philosopher Alvin Plantinga explains that every Noetic structure is “The set of propositions a person believes, together with particular epistemic relations that hold among the person and these propositions.”<sup>5</sup> Thomas Morris continues to explain that a person's noetic structure forms “...[T]he most basic and most general beliefs about God, man, and the world that anyone can have. They are not usually consciously entertained, but rather function as the perspective from which an individual sees and interprets both the events of his own life and the various circumstances of the world around him. These presuppositions in conjunction with one another delimit the boundaries within which all other less foundational beliefs are held.”<sup>6</sup>

The author calls his tool “The Noetic Apologetic Method.” This method incorporates a tool in the form of a flowchart. The apologist will evaluate the question or presupposition and by a set of guidelines, can eventually come up with the most efficient method(s) to achieve the apologetic goal. Therefore, this writer defines the Noetic Apologetic Method as the defense of the faith based on the intelligence or understanding of the sum of the total views about God and the understanding of the Gospel that person has. The Noetic Method is the exposition of these

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God: Faith in Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 48.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 109.

ideas in a systematic and coherent way. A person's understanding of a Noetic structure will have degrees of value. That is to say; there are things more vital for some, but for others they do not hold the same level of importance. This is why there are methods that would be more relevant to some individuals and not to others. This is key for an effective apologetic. The apologist must address the person's noetic structure even before proceeding to the apologetic methodology. This is the reason that many apologists are perceived as irrelevant while giving a defense of the hope they have in Christ.

An example of this could be applied into the field of apologetics by saying that for some people, the thought of the historicity of the Bible is not as significant as the existence of God in the context of the person's Noetic structure. Therefore, the Noetic method must first determine the epistemological concepts of the person and then present an apologetic on the basis of the sum total exposition of all apologetic methodological understanding. In other words, for every inquiry about the Faith, a set of coherent responses is given based on the method(s) that will address the issue in the epistemological framework of the person. The benefit of this is that the apologist will be able to follow the guide in order to provide a more concise answer "to the Faith."

By developing a tool to accomplish this task, the apologist will select from a predetermined set of presuppositions or type of questions, and then proceed to the apologetic method that best answers that idea. Here a more Socratic approach is useful. The apologist could ask a pre-determined set of questions such as: *How did you come to that conclusion? Why do you believe that? Have you considered the implications of your belief? What premises did you use?* These are questions that will help the apologist determine the overall noetic structure of the other person. This is key in order to understand the correct type or category of question, argument or comment being made against Christian beliefs.

### System of Evaluation

The apologists must understand several key aspects when engaged in the task of apologetics. First, the apologist must consider the person who is being addressed. Is the person a believer or not? Are the questions asked for the sake of controversy or are they legitimate inquiries? The apologist must find out the overall noetic structure of the other person. Obviously, it is important to mention that the art of listening is essential for the task of doing apologetics.

There are steps to develop a noetic method of apologetics. The first step is to examine the persons' overall noetic structure. The first question to ask is: Are the arguments being presented by Christian or non-Christian? The next step is to assess the question, objection, or argument. This is accomplished when the apologist asks the right questions that would expose the motives of the opponent or questioner. The next step is to categorize the objections or questions: Is it a scientific, philosophical, religious or biblical question? Then the apologist can proceed with the response that best suits the questioner. Finally, the process is repeated as needed. In this step, it is important to ask the other person if the answer was understood, or at least acceptable in terms of the question and if any other clarification is needed.

The evaluation of the Noetic method of apologetics will integrate the use of a flowchart. The integral parts of the flowchart include the assessment of the person's noetic structure, as well as the challenges, question or statements being made. The pattern to follow is to begin from the top of the chart and work down towards the type of answers. It is important that these answers and methods are not conclusive and that they are primarily aimed at establishing a stronger initial basis for apologetics, supporting a Christian response in most situations in which a question or challenge is presented.

The use of individuals to further develop studies in the use of the Noetic Apologetic Method will require special permits and confidentiality forms, as is required for all such research. This step was outside of the scope of the present thesis. However, this method is deemed an excellent opportunity for anyone who would like to engage in further studies in apologetics.

The following pages define a flowchart that will aid the apologist in the Noetic Method.

## Application and Principle of Noetic Apologetics

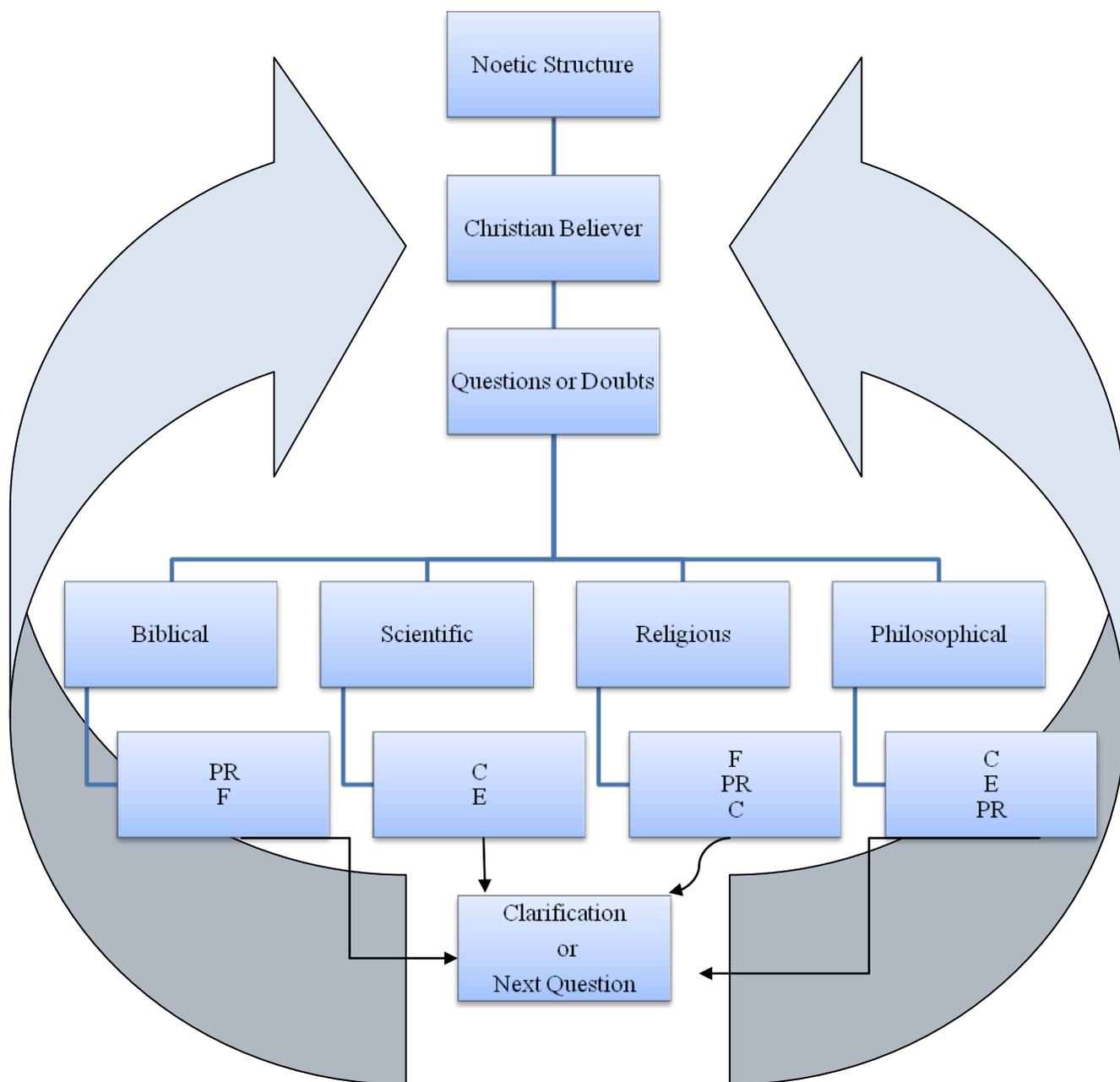


Figure 1. Noetic Method of Apologetics – Christian Model Flowchart

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Key – PR (Presuppositional), E (Evidentialist), C (Classical), & F (Fideistic)

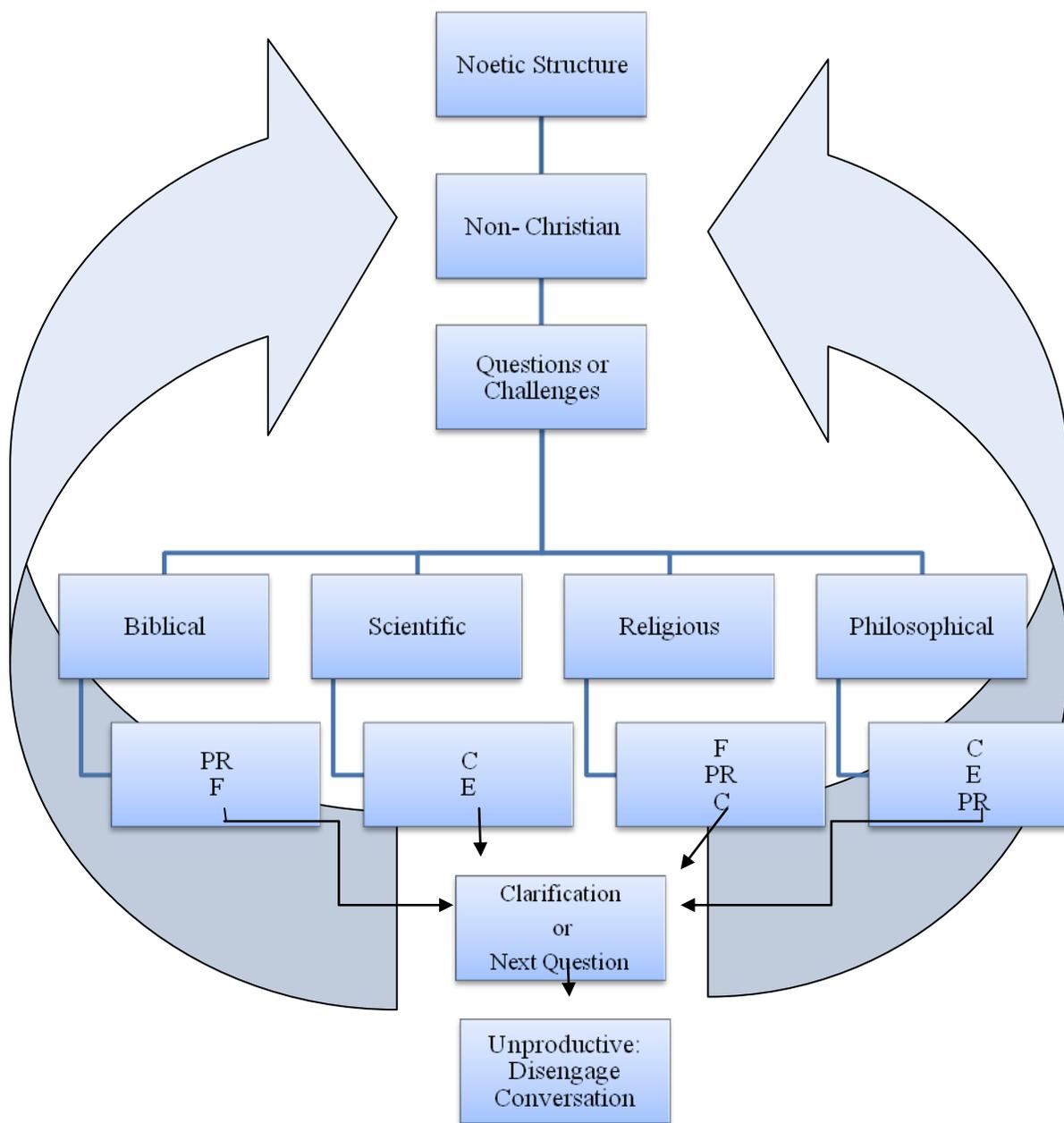


Figure 2. Noetic Method of Apologetics – Non- Christian Model Flowchart

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Key – PR (Presuppositional), E (Evidentialist), C (Classical), & F (Fideistic)

## **Conclusion**

This thesis presented the need for a more efficient way of doing apologetics. Apologetics, as it is currently being done, does not have a set method for addressing questions and challenges, thus depriving the apologist of the only reasonable tool he or she has to be as effective as possible. As it was explained, the apologist has more than one method in the arsenal of answers. There is no doubt that all Christians are commanded by the Lord to be engaged as apologists within their culture and the world at large. This engagement is seen as having been carried out to various degrees of success throughout the centuries. As the challenges to Christianity have emerged, so too have apologists taken on the task of confronting each and every one. This work has been an attempt by the author to come up with a practical tool that could help develop apologetics within the author's ministry and that of other ministries and Christian activities.

This thesis is just one more way to intellectually stimulate others to be engaged in the task of doing apologetics. The author of this thesis would like to encourage others to continue expanding their spiritual and intellectual boundaries, as the Lord commands. The greatest commandment is to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind, and others as yourself. This is exactly what this thesis is trying to accomplish. To serve God and to serve others by doing the Noetic Apologetic Method.

## **Recommendations for Practitioners**

An important goal for this thesis was to come up with a tool that would allow the apologists to better select a method or methods for doing apologetics. This thesis was based on

the Noetic Method, a tool developed as a theory for broader use. Therefore, the author of this thesis suggests the following actions based on the proposed model:

1. The author of this thesis will like to stress that this tool was developed for the glory of God. The apologists must always have in mind that they are not working for themselves. They must remember that apologists are servants of the Lord.
2. The author of this thesis recommends that the apologist be familiar with other apologetic methods. It is important to recognize the strong and weak points of other approaches.
3. It is recommended that when an opponent of Christianity is antagonistic to the message and answers given, the apologist must kindly retract from the argument. As many have said, "It is better to lose the argument, but to have a chance to win a soul."
4. If further studies are desired and interview-based studies are going to be done, the author recommends that an approval from the IRB committee of the institution be acquired and other required permits be properly completed before any findings are recorded.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

This thesis involved a definition, purpose, and historical survey of apologetics and its methods. However, the Noetic Method or tool is only part of a theory for doing apologetics. Therefore, this provides the advantage for researchers in the field of apologetic methodology to complete a case study on the applications of the Noetic Method of Apologetics. Accordingly, the author of this thesis suggests that in the case of further study and investigation, the following be used as potential guidelines:

1. Study the common thread of challenges being presented in apologetics at the present time. As this thesis has shown, the challenges to the apologists in all the historical ages do not differ much within the apologist's own time period. These challenges usually remain for a vast period of time, thus allowing the apologist to further hone in on their apologetic response.

2. Use the tool often with unbelievers and not as much with Christians. The apologist's main concern should be for the lost. Christians will have doubts and questions. However, they are usually the same inquiries that the non-Christian has. This provides the opportunity to minister and bring the Gospel to the life of another person. It must be remembered that the main task of the apologist is to persuade others to come to Christ.

3. Prepare a log of the outcome of every conversation using the Noetic Method and tabulate the findings. This will provide for an enriched opportunity to evaluate the efficiency of the method and aid in the scientific exploration of this method.

4. Finally, the investigator should look for ways to simplify the process for doing apologetics as often as possible and studying the process to offer his or her insights.

In addition, the author of this thesis recommends that this method be revised as studies continue. The author of this thesis suggests that the term Noetic Method of Apologetics remain in all future studies.

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