

Defender of the Faith:
Can the Early Church Apologists
Inform the Needs and Direction of the Church Today?

By:
Alexander D. Craven

A thesis submitted to
St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies

August, 2016, Halifax, Nova Scotia

© Alexander D. Craven, 2016

Approved: Dr. David Deane
Supervisor

Approved: Dr. Magi Abdul-Masih
Reader

Approved: Dr. Timothy Muldoon
Examiner

Submitted: August 17, 2016

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One – Contextualization of the Question and Areas of Study.....	8
1.1 – The Historical Context of the Second Century.....	10
1.2 – Congruencies and Differences between the Ancient and Modern Context.....	22
1.3 – The Present State of Apologetics and its Vocabulary	43
Chapter Two – Analysis of Apologetic Works.....	50
2.1 – Argument from Antiquity and Ethnicity.....	51
2.2 – Appeals to Authority.....	60
2.3 – The Christians and the Apologists as Citizens of the Empire.....	65
2.4 – Apology and Ambient Philosophy.....	71
Chapter Three – Lessons from the Second Century.....	89
3.1 – The Problematic Nature of Legitimization Concerning the Modern Age and Second Century Apologetic Rhetoric.....	94
3.2 -- Challenges to Apologetic Engagement and Legitimization in Secular Society.....	107
3.3 – The Potential Pitfalls of Apologetic Language.....	121
3.4 – The Course for Modern Apologetics as Assisted by the Second Century Apologists.....	132
Conclusion.....	146
Bibliography.....	151

Abstract

Defender of the Faith: Can the Early Church Apologists
Inform the Needs and Direction of the Church Today?

Alexander D. Craven

Both the second century and the modern age are suspicious of the message and influence of Christianity within their respective cultures; the culture of religious pluralism and the prevailing civil religions of each time period suggest that tools used by the early Church fathers may prove useful in a modern context. In this thesis I will examine the extent to which the second century apologists are able to inform and assist the modern apologetic project. The second century apologists demonstrated a keen ability to navigate cultural norms and, in many cases, work within the ambient philosophical discourse of their time in order to produce a defense of the Christian message in terms understandable to an outside audience. Translating forward their ability to work within the cultural context of their time via language amenable to their audience sheds new light on potentially useful methods for modern apologists.

August 17, 2016

Keywords: Apologetics, antiquity, modernity, postmodernity, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Athenagoras, *pax deorum*, social action, rhetoric, Benedict Option, Dominic Option

Introduction:

Apologetics in the modern age presents a definitively unique set of challenges. In addition to the more upfront task of defending the Church and the Gospel from being deconstructed, abused, or otherwise misunderstood, the linguistic and cultural tools available in the present pluralist era, dominated by philosophical liberalism, are perhaps tools which at first feel unwieldy. Furthermore, the rhetoric of legitimate authority seems to no longer rest in institutions and traditions, but in a general popular sovereignty and in individual conscience. While not intrinsically bad things in their own right, these complications to the apologetic task are certainly challenges worth examining, and when one takes the time to examine the underlying demands which these challenges place upon the apologist, a hopeful point of comparison emerges from within the earliest stages of the Christian Tradition.

The earliest apologists for the Church contended with a world which seems to bear noteworthy similarity to our own. The general structure of the Roman Empire all but necessitated a plural society, within which various religious and cultural groups moved, operated, and debated often in the interest of preserving their own legacies and heritage. The ambient Hellenistic philosophy of the time was something which placed importance on a specific and refined rhetorical and argumentative style in order for a given school to solidify itself as a legitimate presence within the body as a whole. This philosophy also, to some extent, pre-set the terminology and the methodology which would lend the greatest credibility to a given sect, and in doing so required a certain level of cultural literacy on the part of those looking to break into the conversation. The concentration of authority was more institutional than it perhaps is now, but similarly to the present day,

the situation could change quickly depending on the perceptions and opinions of those who wielded that authority. Perhaps most strikingly though, the outside perception upon the then-nascent Church was one of suspicion, thinking of these newly minted Christians as somehow a threat to the things held sacred by the general ethos and culture of the Roman Empire. These generalized aspects seem to point us in a direction which suggests that an examination of the second century apologists might be able to inform the needs of the present-day Church, and sculpt a methodology for apologetics in the 21st century.

In the course of this thesis, I propose to look to the past in order to better inform the present. My aim is to investigate the apologetic works of three specific second century apologists, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Athenagoras, and determine the extent to which these early Church Fathers might be able to inform and meet the apologetic needs of the present-day Church. Ultimately through this investigation, I hope to provide some answer to the question of how the Church can bring the Gospel to a world which is, while perhaps not necessarily hostile to it in the same way the Roman Empire was towards the early Church, is nevertheless still a world which is still certainly skeptical of the Church, of evangelism, and of organized religion at large. In broader and slightly less verbose language, I propose to investigate whether the defenses made for Christianity in its infancy in some way help to establish and defend the place of the Church in the (post)modern era. Methodologically, in investigating this question I will be utilizing a mix of textual analysis, coupled with sociological and historical lenses in order to gauge how the voices of ancient Christianity can inform the Church today.

The first chapter will attempt to deal on a sociological level and a historical level with both ancient and modern sources. This chapter will provide both a detailed literature

review coupled with a contextualization of cultural and rhetorical norms for each respective time period. The aim in doing so is to provide the foundational work necessary for a detailed understanding of the situation facing both the ancient apologists and the state of affairs governing modern Christian apologetics; this process will provide the framework for the analyses to follow in the subsequent chapters. Specifically in this chapter, I will highlight significant points of congruency between the ancient and modern eras, most notably the cultural and political situation of religion in both time periods, the presence of a general religious pluralism, and the semi-permeability of participation in various religious traditions. The investigation of these elements and their presence in both eras helps underline the logic that it is therefore possible and valuable to lift the ideas, insights, and wisdom of the ancient sources and place them in the modern period because the cultural conditions are similar enough to merit such treatment of the texts.

At the same time though, it is crucial to also appropriately identify and discuss key areas of difference between the two epochs, differences which may be obvious as well as ones which may require a more nuanced and subtle understanding of the forces at play. Not least of these aspects demanding analysis is the manner of qualification applied to religious groups in order to identify them as tolerable and legitimate public voices. This discussion necessarily continues into a discussion of the secular nature of the present world, especially in light of the ancient world's lack of any such distinction between religious and non-religious territory. These differences create situations where the second century context has difficulty relating meaningfully, but in the end, as this thesis will show, these differences do not undo or cripple the apologists' ability to address the modern context. By the conclusion of this chapter, the reader should have a nuanced

understanding of the relevant cultural contexts thus enabling a greater discussion of these elements in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter focuses almost exclusively on the writings of the apologists themselves, and is divided into two parts. In the first section, the primary focus will be on a direct and critical reading of the apologetic works, coupled with analysis of how their apologetic devices and rhetoric sought to deal with the challenges of their time. Of special importance in this section are the notions of establishing the legitimacy of Christianity as participant in an ancient and ancestral tradition, the shifting methods and content of rhetoric for different audiences, and the placation of the socio-political concerns of the imperial establishment. Each of these themes represents an area of critical concern for the efficacy and acceptance of the apologetic language in its time and which therefore raises questions of its similarity (or not) with the context of modern Christianity. By analyzing the rhetoric and methodology inherent in the apologists' treatment of these themes, this section will present forms of apology ready for interrogation in the modern context.

The second section of this chapter will hone in on the way in which each individual apologist worked to address how the theology and practice of the new Christian religion could or should interact with the philosophical norms of their day. This interaction is in many ways a corollary from the themes explored in the previous section and to some extent represents a more detailed exploration of how the apologists sought to legitimize the Christian message to a 'secular' audience, that is one which exists outside the Church and one which may not claim the same theological and philosophical foundations as the Church. However, this discussion also goes beyond a simple

commentary and beyond viewing the extent to which the interaction between Christianity and the philosophical discussions of the day as a solely rhetorical tactic. Rather this second section serves to demonstrate the implications inherent in each apologist's attempt to deal with ambient philosophy and to offer a generalized spectrum for how these attempts might be treated. Ultimately this discussion also helps to point us in the direction of the third chapter which will interrogate the extent to which these lessons and tactics carry over into the world of the present day Church.

In the final chapter of this thesis, the contextualized elements from chapters one and two are brought to bear on the thesis question itself in an effort to determine how and to what extent the second century apologists can speak to the present day. Thus, the third chapter is largely one of dialogue between the situations of ancient and modern apologetics. In this chapter, we first examine the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of modern society and what has come to distinguish the distinctly secular world from the religious one. The differentiations elucidated in chapter one are brought forward in the light of our chapter two analysis of the apologists; these differentiations then narrow down the terrain upon which we might allow the second century examples to play out. This process does involve some tracing of themes back through history, which may seem slightly tangential at first, but is in the service of ultimately illustrating the genealogy of the fundamental assumptions which define how many modern Western individuals view the world. Key in this chapter as well is a discussion of the extent to which the apologetic task should or should not give linguistic or philosophical ground to the culture at large; this is in many ways an attempt to address a key aspect of apologetics

in any time period: the extent to which the apologetic process should make Christianity palatable and unthreatening to an audience unfamiliar with it.

Finally, with the terrain so outlined, the third chapter of this thesis delves into the manners of speech, the questions of modernity, and the examples set forward by the second century apologists to spell out an apologetic method for the present informed by the lessons and struggles of the past. This section blends the voices of the previous chapters together in order to articulate both the implications of the ancient voices on the present state of affairs, and the concerns or questions we are left with requiring further discussion and answering. Here we will continue to revisit many of the voices presented in the first chapter which helped to contextualize the situation, enhance the discourse, and attempt to present the fullest possible picture (within the scope of this project) of the possible directions for the Church¹ in the 21st century.

As part of the conclusion to this project, I will combine the final points and directions of my investigation into the relationship between ancient and modern apologetics with a brief discussion concerning areas of study and expansion which result from the conclusions of the final chapter. Admittedly this thesis requires a narrowed field of view in order to treat with the content in a deep enough manner; by process of doing this, it touches more tangentially on some subject matter which would likely merit more investigation and thought than the present discussion is able to afford it. Thus in the

¹ It is worth observing that what comprised the *ekklesia* in the time of the early apologists and what we see as the Church in the present day has undergone considerable change in the 1,800 years in between. As much as possible throughout this thesis, I will attempt to clarify when necessary whether the use term Church refers to the institutional Church, the Church as the people of God, etc. This also reflects that there may be an inescapable difference between the modern use and understanding of the word and what the likes of Justin, Tertullian, or Athenagoras may have understood it to mean.

conclusion provided a discussion of the implications of the conclusions reached in chapter three, identify certain areas for academic expansion based on the ideas inherent to my thesis, and bring to a close the ideas and directions spelled out by our analysis of the second century apologists.

The topic I have broached with my thesis question is one of significance to the present day Church, which seems at time to struggle with presenting itself and presenting the Gospel to the present day world. With a need to reassert the legitimacy and the radical nature of the message of Jesus Christ to a culture which seems to have trouble embracing it, the apologetics of the present day might be wise to take all the help the great tradition of the Church is able to muster. The writings and rhetoric of the second century certainly seem an amply fertile place for such an investigation and it is to starting that investigation that we now turn.

Chapter One: Contextualization of the Question and Areas of Study

The initial task for this project is a contextualization of both the Roman imperial context and, as will be argued, the modern Western ‘imperial’ context. This contextualization will indicate areas where congruency might exist, and therefore ground the process of direct dialogue between ancient and modern sources. However, in identifying areas of similarity one must not forget the obvious: that the 21st century is markedly different from the second century. Therefore when appropriate in the course of identifying similarities, this thesis will also indicate areas of marked difference from the cultural and historical context of the past. It is also worth mentioning at this juncture that the aim of the thesis is only to demonstrate congruency and similarity, rather than a strict one-to-one equality between the general time periods in question.

Overall this contextualization will be subdivided into three major parts. The first part will be an examination of the ancient historical context and Christianity’s place and movements within it. In this section we will explore an in-depth discussion of the ancient culture out of which Christianity emerged and several factors affecting the content, rhetoric and theology of the apologetic fathers. The overall goal of contextualizing these aspects of the apologetic argument is to establish what facets of the prevailing culture were of specific interest to the apologetic fathers. This section will lend itself towards an understanding of the various cultural elements at play in the Roman Empire, what expectations they created for the Roman subject, and what consequences befell those who existed outside these norms. This section also helps to situate elements which will be discussed at greater length in chapter two, specifically concerning how Christian apologists at once employed and yet disavowed themselves of various elements of this

culture in an effort to appear familiarly Roman while at the same time holding fast to foundationally novel aspects of Christianity. Paula Fredriksen's work regarding the relationship between early Christianity and the Roman Empire will serve as a central trunk to our narrative logic, while also allowing us to branch into the work of scholars like Robert Beck concerning the religious market economy of the Roman Empire, as well as Martin Goodman's and W.H.C. Frend's discussions concerning the debate on first century (Jewish) missionaries.

The next section will make use of a range of scholars, including the likes of Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, and Timothy Shah in the interest of discussing areas where I believe there is considerable congruity between the world of the second century and that of today. Connections will be drawn between themes and practices seemingly prevalent in both the modern age and the Roman period. This section will also examine what modern elements might be representative or evocative of cultish gods, and the inherent difficulties in challenging those elements. This section will serve as foundational for the discussion to come in the third chapter analysis of the apologists' relevancy to the modern world as it seeks to identify specific aspects of the modern culture which modern Christians and apologists must contend with. In identifying these aspects we similarly identify places where the rhetoric, style, and theology of the second century apologist might have enough of an intellectual and cultural beachhead to push into our time period and advise the efforts of present day apologists.

The final section will introduce the philosophical elements at play in the present discussion and identify some of the perceived consequences voiced by significant figures in the field. These elements and their consequences will serve to lead us into our chapter

two examination of the apologists and will likewise be revisited in the third chapter analysis as well. The crux of our discussion at this point will center on the present day apologetic argument between Alasdair MacIntyre's Benedict Option and the so called Dominic Option articulated by C.C. Pecknold. In addition to these two scholars, this third section will also bring in voices such as Tim Muldoon and Pope Francis as figures who seek out the applicability of the aforementioned apologetic options. This discussion will identify the underpinning assumptions and logic prevalent in the world as it exists today and how these elements challenge and complicate Christian apologetics. This will be particularly evident with respect to any attempt to draw similarities between the 21st and the second centuries given the markedly different philosophical atmospheres of these respective time periods. Yet at the same time, this section will also provide a grounding for understanding how the prevailing philosophical and moral currents can affect and influence the apologetic project.

Section 1.1 – The Historical Context of the Second Century

Having so introduced the topics of this chapter, let us now turn to the initial task of historical contextualization of the ancient world. Paula Fredriksen's chapter "Christians in the Roman Empire in the first Three Centuries C.E.," in her contribution to David Potter's *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, is particularly striking in its portrayal of the intricacy of connection between religion and daily life. It is perhaps telling and informative that in the first few paragraphs of her chapter, Fredriksen points out in that this permeation of religion and its ubiquity in the life of the person is something which a modern Western individual might have difficulty fully realizing. She caricatures the

modern Westerner as one who, typically, has a somewhat detached notion of religion, thinking of it as “something largely personal or private, a question first of all of beliefs” and who also has a somewhat detached notion of God and religion, thinking of it as a ‘personal identity’ or “as a unique, transcendent, somewhat isolated metaphysical point,”² In this we clearly see a distinction between then and now of religion’s once ubiquitous status reigned in and given over to something done individually or privately rather than as a communal act undertaken by the whole of a given populace. This observation is a crucial one and, again, is one which characterizes the modern and postmodern eras

Fredriksen’s overall task in her chapter is threefold: (1) the context of religious worship in the Roman period, along with its implications for the state; (2) the social upheaval caused by the renunciation of one’s ancestral gods; and (3) the tense relationship concerning the Jewish roots of Christian communities as they apply to conversion, theology, and customs. We will examine each of these points in order to flesh out the setting for the early Christian apologists and to outline points of possible congruency in our own time. Though this is only a subsection of the overall conversation with a focus towards similarities between the modern context and the Roman period, it will serve as a place to start the discussion. Additionally, as mentioned in the above chapter introduction, these points will also draw additional scholars in the field into the discussion, brought in for the purpose of better understanding the motivations behind and consequences of a religious ethos such as we will see Fredriksen articulate.

² Paula Fredriksen, “Christians in the Roman Empire in the First Three Centuries C.E.,” in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David S. Potter (Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 589.

With respect to the first point, concerning the role and implications of religion in the Roman Empire, Fredriksen notes the prevalence and consequences of a largely polytheistic worldview. By her reckoning, even “monotheists were polytheists. It was their behavior, not their beliefs, that distinguished these groups from others.”³

Fredriksen’s defining of polytheism via behavioral methods rather than by belief alone is something worth considering, and it provides her with room to look at the situation in a broader capacity. The fact that most communities living under Roman hegemony had gods or cults tied to their own land and culture meant that religious difference looked much different than we might imagine it today. The question, Fredriksen notes, was how to deal respectfully with the other gods, rather than a question of which gods were right or wrong, real or fictitious. The religious expectation in the time of the empire was that each person should honor the gods of their ancestors, and that one’s allegiance to those particular gods was first and foremost; one could honor the god of another cult (for example Mithras or Dionysus), but the understanding was that “this openness to other cults in principle did not loosen the ties of obligation and respect that bound people, first of all, to their own gods.”⁴ This seems to establish a kind of religious culture that is on some levels semi-permeable, wherein there exists a certain degree of religious flexibility in the overall religious marketplace, so long as existing obligations are properly honored.

Building onto this notion, Fredriksen also points out the Hellenistic influence on the Roman Empire had expanded religion to have a civic aspect. Ranging from public holiday celebrations, to government functions, to entertainment events, the urban people

³ Fredriksen, 590.

⁴ Fredriksen, 592.

living under the empire engaged in activities which today we would certainly see as secular or neutral,⁵ but at the time were religiously charged events honoring the gods of the city or the cult of Rome itself. For defining both ancestral and civic religious devotion, Fredriksen offers the following rationale: “Citizens and residents displayed their respect to the heavenly patrons of their city, thereby ensuring continued divine favor;”⁶ Fredriksen offers the term *pax deorum* as the descriptor of the peace achieved by man through proper honoring of the gods. Whatever individual devotions or covenants one might have with a god, the religious institutions in the Roman Empire were social bonds through which one supported the continued peace and prosperity of one’s community and of the empire as a whole. As a result, participation in these cults was in many cases a matter of duty to one’s local community and to what we might anachronistically call the nation-state.

Roger Beck’s work on the religious market of the Roman Empire, in his article so named, can help us to nuance and better understand the outline Fredriksen provides. While, the primary aim of Beck’s article is to critique Rodney Stark’s models of religious economy expressed in *The Rise of Christianity*, many of Beck’s observations and claims ring true even outside of an analysis of Stark. The primary thrust of Beck’s argument is that Roman paganism existed as “an altogether more formidable and complex thing”⁷ concerned with the public good (*pax deorum*) and pervasively involved with the life of

⁵ See Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), Chs. 15 & 38 for examples of acknowledgements to this effect from Christian apologetic sources.

⁶ Fredricksen, 592.

⁷ Roger Beck, “The Religious Market of the Roman Empire: Rodney Stark and Christianity’s Pagan Competition” in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, ed. Leif Vaage (Wilfred Laurier University Press: 2006) 236.

the *polis* community and empire-at-large,⁸ and which was also accessible non-exclusively with respect to other cults.⁹ Indeed, these concepts are very much in sync with what we have previously seen in Paula Fredriksen's work, but Beck's analysis nuances the application of these themes with respect to the rise of Christianity.

Perhaps the most significant point argued by Beck is his application of the elements of Greco-Roman religion leading him to a conclusion that is not explicitly found in Fredriksen, though one might be able to intuit something like it from her work. Beck first outlines what he considers to be a central tenet of Stark's religious economy, namely that paganism was too 'diversified' in a sense and produced its religious goods individually and privately; this then was supplanted by the communal and collectively produced religious goods offered by new movements like Christianity. Against Stark's religious economic model, Beck claims that "pagan firms were similar, if finally less effective, competitors in the market; they too, put collective goods on offer, though in most cases their product lines were more limited than Christianity's."¹⁰ The criticism offered here is that Stark's model does not allow for a collective nature or the forging of communal bonds, but according to Beck, the Greco-Roman religion depends upon such collective products.

Beck emphasizes and re-emphasizes this throughout his article, citing instances found in the Mithras cults¹¹ but also within the mainstream Greco-Roman religion. Indeed, the previously cited elements of the cult religion, elements shown to be congruent

⁸ Beck, 242.

⁹ Beck, 235 & 238.

¹⁰ Beck, 237.

¹¹ Beck, 240.

to Fredriksen's insights, are elements which lend themselves to the formation of collective religious goods and communal bonds. The very nature of the *pax deorum* accord in many ways forces a collective nature into the functionality of the religion. Beck outlines that it is "the apparatus of temples, priesthoods, festivals, sacrifice, etc., by which the gods are served as they require, and by so doing renew the *pax deorum*,"¹² and further, that by the production of these goods and services, those who can fund them honor the gods by doing so and those who do not have such funds are also able to honor the gods by enjoying the "free ride" of attending and participating in them.¹³ Thus, we find in the Greco-Roman religion, a markedly sturdy foundation for communal life, albeit a communal life with different focuses and mechanics than what Christianity seemed to aim for. It is also a communal life which Beck, even with his criticism of Stark, still admits is ultimately weaker than the Christian capability to produce its own types of collective religious goods and communal bonding and commitment.

With this focus on the communal nature of Greco-Roman religion so emphasized, as well as its close relationship to the overall good of the community, it seems appropriate to now shift into the second discussion point of Fredriksen's chapter: the perceived social upheaval caused by the rejection of one's ancestral gods. As our investigation into Fredriksen's work has already mentioned, the social end to which religious practice moved was the prosperity and peace of the city and empire. And as Beck's analysis has demonstrated, this peace and prosperity was produced via a very specific engine of religiously produced communal goods. It is against this bulwark of the

¹² Beck, 250.

¹³ Beck, 248.

community, at least through Roman eyes, that Christianity acts as an element of destruction and atheism. The Christian insistence that one who converts would give up all their pagan practices and ties, confused the mind of the typical Roman, who saw “the Christians [as] still members of their own [nation], with the standing obligations to the gods of their [nation], who were the gods of the majority.”¹⁴

Jörg Ulrich likewise recognizes the general sense of confusion that outsiders to the Christian faith had towards the upstart religion. The nature of the struggle, according to Ulrich, stems from the way in which “Roman society was characterized by a striking religious pluralism. However, with the appearance of Christianity, it was confronted by a phenomenon which distinguished itself from other religions by raising the claim of absoluteness.”¹⁵ Ulrich continues to argue that this absolutist claim to Truth propagated by Christians made Christianity’s integration into the religious fabric of the empire more-or-less an impossibility. He cites the criticisms of those like Celsus and Caecilius as evidence that the pagan mindset was ill equipped to comprehend the soteriological message of nascent Christianity, and that it was unacceptable for any religious group to assert its mythos as an absolute by which all people must judge their lives and actions.

Yet obviously by the doctrines of Christian thought (what we might call a monotheism of both belief *and* practice), the same people had to give up such ties to other gods, religious movements, and claims to truth. With this disavowal of the religious status-quo, came the risk of upsetting the *pax deorum*, breaking the bonds which many

¹⁴ Fredriksen, 601.

¹⁵ Jörg Ulrich, “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 2.

believed at the time kept them safe and prosperous in their endeavors. This was an obviously steep social cost for a Christian convert to pay, but not only in the sense that one might be outwardly persecuted or criticized for it. As mentioned previously, many of the activities of life, from a plebian trip to the athletic competitions to certain patrician governmental functions all were tinged with honors to the pagan gods. This created quite a minefield for the early Christians in negotiating an economy and system of life that was permeated by what was doctrinally taboo for a faithful believer, putting them into what Fredriksen calls “a social and religious no man’s land.”¹⁶

The final discussion point in Fredriksen’s chapter to be treated here deals with the complicated relationship between Christianity and its Jewish roots. Fredriksen notes that some of the issues which caused problems between Romans and Christians are nominally present in Judaism; again, most notable among them is the monotheistic aspect, requiring the renunciation of allegiance to any other deity. I call this problem nominal for two reasons. First of all, Fredriksen points out that there were many gentiles who were interested in reading the Jewish Scripture and participating in communal activities. Again, for the gentiles the membrane of religious practice is at least semi-permeable and participation in the rites and rituals of another deity (again, such as those of the mystery cults), or attendance at the religious gatherings of more culturally bound religions such as the Jews, posed no real problem so long as one’s ancestral deities were properly honored. Fredriksen notes of these interested gentiles that “these sympathetic gentiles were neither asked nor encouraged to convert to Judaism as a condition for joining this new movement

¹⁶ Fredriksen, 597.

forming within the penumbra of the synagogue.”¹⁷ This makes the problem of monotheism for pagans interested in Judaism really a nominal issue; they didn’t need to practice or believe as the Jews did, nor were they encouraged to. One then notices here a stark contrast between the Jewish non-proselytizing and the Christian missionary efforts.

As a brief aside here, it is important to have perhaps a little firmer grasp concept of early Common Era Jewish proselytization. At present, consensus seems divided on whether or not such a phenomenon was present in the Jewish communities in and outside of traditionally Jewish lands. W.H.C. Frend operates under the assumption that such missionary efforts were indeed going on, suggesting proselytization was part of the Jewish context within the Diaspora.¹⁸ Frend argues that these efforts stressed tension between the Jews and their gentile neighbors, and that the Jewish populace found most of its protection under the imperial recognition of Judaism as *religio licita*¹⁹ in recognition of their practice “of the customs of their forefathers.”²⁰ These privileges continued even after the Jewish War of 66-73, though perhaps with increased mistrust and tension.

However, more recent scholars like Martin Goodman call the assumptions of intentional and widespread Jewish mission into question. Treating the entirety of Goodman’s argument here is a larger and different task than what this present thesis allows for; suffice to say with respect to this topic that Goodman’s point, more than Frend’s, serves to underline the significance of what Fredriksen has likewise put forward. The thrust of Goodman’s argument is that “the role of the Jews was simply passively to

¹⁷ Fredriksen, 596.

¹⁸ c.f. W.H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 19 & 35-36.

¹⁹ Frend, 35.

²⁰ Frend, 19.

bear witness through their existence and piety”²¹ and that “the initiative [in conversion]... came from the would-be converts, not the converter.”²² This gels with our earlier treatment of Ulrich as well, as any absolutist soteriological claims made by the Jews would likely have resulted in the same ire that ultimately came the way of the Christians, yet there is surprisingly little evidence of this if it were indeed the case. While the situation certainly seems to demonstrate room in the Jewish tradition for interested parties, both Goodman and Fredriksen agree that by and large, the Jewish community did not seek to win converts in a traditional sense, but were willing to share with interested parties the teachings of the Jewish tradition. Ultimately, as Fredriksen puts it “gentiles would be included *as gentiles*,”²³ and this seems to preclude any need to bring the gentiles into the Jewish cultural and religious fold. This stands against the growing Christian movement where there indeed seemed a great deal of emphasis placed upon the invitation and proselytization of new members into an absolutist belief structure ultimately at odds with many of the things held dear in the Roman Empire.

Returning to our main line of reasoning, the second reason I call any potential issues with the demands of Judaism nominal is that Fredriksen points out that there were social allowances in place to deal with the circumstance of a pagan choosing to embrace Judaism and forsaking their previous gods, though again they seem largely unencouraged by the Jews to do so. One might be pressed to ask why Judaism, for allowing such things

²¹ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 86.

²² Goodman, 84.

²³ Fredriksen, 595. Emphasis in the original.

at all, wasn't pressed as some kind of corrupting influence²⁴ or a detriment to the state in a way even close to the persecution suffered by Christians. The answer, again, seems to come from the notion that the Jews were not actively missionizing *for the intent of conversion*. There did exist what Goodman calls Jewish apologetic or educational mission,²⁵ but it seems more for the purpose of passing on the knowledge and wisdom of the tradition rather than to invite people into the community as adherents to the faith. However the answer also seems to come, perhaps even more so than the previous point, from what Fredriksen phrases thusly: "The ancient pagans by and large were prepared to respect Jewish religious difference, and even to make social allowances for it, precisely because of Judaism's *ethnicity* and *antiquity*."²⁶

It is in these two words, ethnicity²⁷ and antiquity, that we find an avenue for religious tolerance and respectability in the Roman Empire. Recall from Frensd's contribution earlier, that Jews were granted various protections and privileges in light "of the customs of their forefathers;" Frensd here is citing from the Roman governor Dolabella, among others of the Roman colonial governments which indicate the

²⁴ Again, Frensd here would argue that there were certainly instances of this, citing for example, Claudius' rebuke to tensions in Alexandria caused by Jewish-gentile conflict. (Cf. Frensd 21-22); however Frensd also notes, and Goodman does likewise, that for much of the first two centuries in the Common Era, that in, in the time period of most concern to us presently, the above statement holds true, with only isolated and sporadic incidents possibly providing singular exceptions.

²⁵ Goodman, 61.

²⁶ Fredriksen, 595. Emphasis added.

²⁷ I do want to recognize that claims regarding ethnicity in this time period are not without controversy, especially as it relates to early Common Era Jewish groups. In the course of this thesis, I will apply the term ethnicity in the sense that I believe Fredriksen uses it: that is, as reflective of the unique nature of Judaism's form of religious and cultural expression as compared to what was common in the Roman Empire. However, in the interest of presenting an alternate perspective on Israelite identity germane to this time period I would recommend Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel*, (London: Routledge Press, 1996), particularly the first and third chapters.

deference to both the Jewish religious traditions, and the traditional (that is, since 161. B.C.E.²⁸) Roman recognition thereof. The relative tolerance for Judaism seems to exist as a result of adherence to norms of its day, including a demonstrably old tradition inherent to the way of life of the Jewish people; a Jewish people notably defined more and more not as a religious sect, but as an ethnic nation.

At this point we seem fit to conclude that relative antiquity and distinct ethnic origins seem to play a key role in securing a ‘pass’ for Judaism where Christianity did not have one. Likewise, the lack of a missionary effort in advancing any absolutist claims also seemed to keep Judaism legally safer than its offshoot. Fredriksen suggests that this cultural understanding might have been a factor in the push from some of the early apostles towards converts being adopted into Judaism fully; a conjecture certainly, though not an unreasonable one. Yet with the acceptance of gentiles as gentiles into the Jesus movement, and the dismissal of circumcision along with most Torah practices, Christianity seemed hampered to connect itself to the ancient traditions of Judaism, moving it further into a socio-religious no-man’s-land. And adding onto this state of affairs, the Jesus movement saw a variety of ethnicities converting, from Palestine to Greece to Rome itself. This left the young movement without any claim to a common ethnic religiosity, and seemed to forfeit claiming refuge in the ethnic legacy which allowed Judaism a certain level of respectability and leeway. Though as we will see in the second chapter, just because it was difficult for Christianity to ride the legal coattails afforded to Judaism, does not mean that the apologists gave up the effort to do so.

²⁸ Frennd, 16.

Section 1.2 -- Congruencies and Differences between the Ancient and Modern Context

Having so treated with the context of the ancient socio-religious milieu, we must remember that an important part of this contextualization process is establishing the relative *congruency* of the ancient and modern imperial contexts, contexts which backdrop the apologetic needs facing the Church both then and now. This necessitates obviously, some establishment of the general topography of the development of modern religion as well. This should be done not only viewing religion as a discrete entity within society, but also of how the role and perception of religion by society has developed and changed since the time of the second century. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine directly the origin and effect of every change in the 1,800 years between these time periods, we will attempt to identify some key points which have affected the relationship of a modern individual to a religion. Fundamentally, this also includes the very concept of *conceiving* of an individual who *has* a relationship to a religion.

It is to these ends that we will, in a sense, trace religion's role and place backwards through history starting from the present day. First, we will utilize the statistical examinations and survey work of figures like Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in the US, and Reginald Bibby in Canada to examine the nature of religious adherence and practice in the modern West. By process of examining their data, our analysis will lead us in the direction of scholars such as Gregory Baum and Tim Muldoon who have attempted to make sense of the ways in which modern (Catholic) Christians have related their faith to the world at large. It is then from this point that we will be lead towards an examination of the underlying philosophy, both civil and religious, that underpins the modern (post-Enlightenment) approach to religion, religious

practice, and religious mission. Jürgen Habermas' reflections on the method of discourse available in the modern public sphere will also be coupled with Timothy Shah's and Charles Taylor's use of Enlightenment thinkers like Grotius, Descartes and Locke, and how such thinkers ultimately founded the hermeneutical lenses through which modern Westerners see the world. With these things established, we will return to the present time to briefly survey the modern apologetic context, specifically as it relates to the so called 'Benedict Option' put forward by Alasdair MacIntyre and the corresponding 'Dominic Option' as articulated by C.C. Pecknold. As one last piece of introduction to this section, it is also worth noting here and reiterating that this aim of this chapter is contextualization, synopsis, and a precis of the current goings on in the sphere of modern religion in general and modern (Catholic) Christianity in particular. To this end we will look at distinct areas of similarity and difference between the ancient and modern worlds. More in-depth analysis of apologetic strategies and plausible directions via a compare/contrast methodology will come in the third chapter where our aim will be to explicitly examine how the second century might be able to speak to the present.

There was, of course, a time not long ago where the predictions of many scholars eminent in discussing the studies of sociology, psychology, and phenomenological religion believed that religion itself was something humanity was gradually growing out of and would soon have no need for. Yet, while the claim that religion is suffering an inevitable decline and ultimately will disappear seems have been made erroneously by the likes of figures like Weber, Durkheim, and perhaps most prominently Nietzsche,²⁹

²⁹ Peter Berger, "Secularization Falsified," *First Things*, Feb 2008, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/02/002-secularization-falsified>.

there is little doubt that religion's form has changed drastically in the time leading up to these men, and continued to change from their time to the present. The work of Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton and the National Survey of Youth and Religion studying teenagers in the United States has indicated that "The majority of teens (60 percent) say they believe that many religions may be true."³⁰ Likewise, the studies of Reginald Bibby have found that more than half of Canadians were willing, or at least not hostile to the notion of deeper religious involvement and attendance with a faith community they found valuable.³¹ These figures bear with them a double edged interpretation that must be considered.

On the one hand these responses suggest that indeed more than half of the Americans and Canadians who participated in these studies are at least open to both the concept of religion and commitment to a religious institution. This again goes to show that religion in the modern age, confronted with largely secular societies, is certainly not ready to be buried and dismissed quite yet. To this end, the predictions of the secularization thesis have not borne out. Yet at the same time, these same statistics have been gathered and reported because of a need on the part institutional religion to understand the shifting needs and thought processes of the people whom they serve. One might also cite here as examples Quebec's Dumont Report³² which Gregory Baum views

³⁰ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 74.

³¹ Joel Thiessen and Lorne L. Dawson, "Is there a Renaissance of Religion in Canada? A Critical Look at Bibby and Beyond" in *Religion and Canadian Society, 2nd Edition*, ed. Lori G. Beaman, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, Inc. 2012), 94.

³² Gregory Baum, "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec", in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America*, ed. David Lyon and Marguerite van Die, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 154

as acknowledging “that the Church could no longer speak for the whole of Quebec, that it had become one public voice among others”, as well as the Larochelle Report³³ years later in the same province, which likewise sought to re-evaluate the place of the Catholic Church in a secular Quebec.

In analyzing these pieces of information, one can extrapolate that in the present-day context, it is hard for a modern person to, in a sense, conceive of a world that is not, bizarrely, ‘polytheist’. I use this term loosely because, while it would be foolish to use that term in its strictest sense, it would be likewise foolish not to recognize the significant presence of the various competing worldviews, faiths, and belief structures, theistic or not, which exist concurrently in the life of the average Western individual. Smith and Denton’s research points toward a generation of youths (now young adults), who seemed to feel a kind of permeability of religious practice not unlike that which existed in the second century. It is not hard to conceive of, for example, a modern individual who is practicing Catholic, but might also engage in Buddhist meditation, attends yoga classes, while also participating in the bris and bar mitzvah of a Jewish friend. While this individual may be an adherent only to the Catholic faith, we see a situation in the above scenario which certainly suggests participation in or at the religious practices of other traditions; in this way it is not unlike the religious context of the Roman period where a gentile might come to learn in a Jewish synagogue after having offered sacrifice to the imperial cult and city gods. The religious tolerance brought about and influenced by

³³ Baum, “Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec”, 160.

enlightenment figures such as Grotius and Locke³⁴ has enabled a rebirth of a culture wherein religious difference can exist, outright and (relatively) peaceably.

This is, I suspect, where we might call forward the Fredriksen quote previously cited. Recall that part of her premise in analyzing early Christianity was the prevailing notion that even monotheists were polytheists via their behavior rather than their beliefs. We find in the modern era a resurfacing of the practice, for better or worse, of religious permeability, with once again, the distinction between monotheist and poly‘theist’ being one of action. In this environment the primary interfaith issue once again becomes how to deal respectfully with other gods (and their subsequent traditions), rather than identifying their objective reality or not. The result, then as now, likewise seems very much the same, though admittedly reached via different roads. We find a kind of religious market, in which ideas and beliefs and, in some cases, whole faiths and Churches sink or swim by their ability to succeed in such an environment.

Such a characterization of the present-day religious context can likewise be found in the works of several scholars who have spent time investigating the development of the religious experience in the modern day. Tim Muldoon’s observation rings true when he states that “To be blunt, consumerism has convinced us that spirituality is another commodity. In a way, consumerism has even created a market for spirituality.”³⁵

³⁴ See Timothy Shah, “Making the World Safe For Liberalism: From Grotius to Rawls,” *The Political Quarterly*, Vol.71 (2000): 126, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=8f32c5d3-24b3-4ff0-bcd5-34df392bfe5a%40sessionmgr4004&vid=1&hid=4206>. Grotius and Locke will feature more prominently later in the section, but the above statement simply suggests that a (mostly) liberal and pacifistic religious plurality is the legacy of the formulations these thinkers devised.

³⁵ Tim Muldoon, *Seeds of Hope: Young Adults and the Catholic Church in the United States*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 12.

Muldoon argues in this statement and throughout *Seeds of Hope*, that the religious context pervasive amongst many younger persons (likely of the same or similar generation to those studied by Smith and Denton given the relative publication dates of these two texts) is grounded by what the religion is capable of producing in terms of its message and actions as well as its self-presentation (or what we might also call its relative marketability). However, Muldoon is also astute in his observation that the Catholic Church is struggling to, as one might colloquially put it, put butts-in-pews, citing polls from *CNN/USA Today* that 95% of Americans believe in God but that percentage is not at all reflective attendance at worship. Muldoon is left to conclude that in the modern individualistic ethos, “Spirituality is easier than religion, because it exempts us from the difficulties of communion and conversion,”³⁶ and we might then conclude from Muldoon that the communal nature of religion and the perceived commitment it requires are in some sense seen as drawbacks for modern individuals shopping for a religious experience that suits the needs of the day.

Our previous analysis of Beck may also prove useful understanding this context, as even if Beck has demonstrated that Stark’s client/firm model of religion is problematic if applied to the classical context, it seems fit to connect it to the modern one. The individuation of the religious consumer seems appropriately suited to a present day religious context, and Beck observes that this is in part because of Christianity “which brought the mentality of radical personal choice and religious self-definition into being, so that Stark’s paradigm of religious behavior in due course becomes germane.”³⁷ It

³⁶ Muldoon, 13.

³⁷ Beck, 242.

seems then, that in some ways, Christianity has had a hand in producing the religious climate it now contests with, having in its infancy developed a system by which the individual and the individual's self-definition were conceived of in remarkably different ways from the Greco-Roman context, even if the method of producing religious products was arguably similar to those of the divine cults.

In some sense, if we extrapolate from Muldoon, Beck and Fredriksen together, we might infer from this a key similarity and a key difference between the two time periods in question. On the one hand Muldoon and Fredriksen denote a religious milieu with a semi-permeable membrane, and each of these scholars recognizes religion as a pluralistic enterprise³⁸ in their respective time periods. However Beck and Muldoon suggest that many people today seem interested in the client/firm relationship with religion. For Beck, coming again out of Stark, this is religion as a client/firm relationship, evidenced as turning to religion in specific times for specific needs. Muldoon on the other hand phrases things differently, though with much the same result, articulating a 'consumerist religion' where religious symbols become objects divorced from their original meaning.³⁹ The difference here is essentially that while both eras exist in an age of religious

³⁸ It's important to note the difference contained in this statement though between the two sources. Whereas Fredriksen has shown that the pluralism of Rome was something of a "by-design" nature of empire, that is, providing space wherein the governance of numerous different ethnicities required a religious system that allowed for plurality, Muldoon suggests that modern plurality (as it affects Catholicism anyway) is a result of more recent generations "Trying to piece together a coherent sense of meaning amidst ruins" (pg. 47). Muldoon's ruins seem to be both the ruins of a culture which is deconstructive of whatever it comes into contact with, but also the still-clearing dust of the Vatican II reforms which also served to disrupt some of the structures of the Church that provided systematic cultural and religious stability to older generations. While for the present discussion I think it is enough to simply acknowledge that this pluralism exists and that further plumbing what brings about pluralism is a topic of sufficient depth for a whole different thesis, I also think if necessary to include this distinction briefly here as a footnote to the discussion as a while.

³⁹ Muldoon, 47.

pluralism, the modern iteration is one focused more on consumerism whereas in the second century it was a tool which sought stability in the empire. Or phrased differently, there exists a culture of religious pluralism today which is positively enabling of religious client/firm constructions, rather than in the second century where such a condition was possible in some cases, but ultimately not the religious end for the society at large.

In having made this claim in reference to the modern age, I would like to further expand on what I mean by utilizing the terms of client/firm in relation to modern society as opposed to ancient culture. In some cases, people may find it more expedient to embrace their inherited faith tradition at specific moments in their lives (such as weddings and funerals) or in other times of distress, celebration, or lifetime milestones. This phenomenon leads to what many, including Gregory Baum,⁴⁰ refer to as a religion that is more cultural than pietistic, such as one who is culturally Catholic or Jewish rather than observantly so. Further, we may also come to find that Beck's insight into the significance of voluntary associations, sometimes explicitly religious and sometimes less so,⁴¹ seems to parallel the significance of institutions like the modern Freemasons or Rotarians; it is noteworthy that while some of these bodies exist with explicitly religious backing, others focus on this less so. Such a perspective may inform us to some extent why there is a reticence towards adopting the communal costs of joining wholly into a particular religious group, given the availability of communal quasi-religious products through such alternative organizations. In brief then, and given the above discussion, it does not seem overly radical to suggest that the religious environment created by Western

⁴⁰ See Baum, "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec," 161.

⁴¹ Beck, 237.

liberalism has in many ways borrowed from religious practices that existed in some form in second century Rome.

While the preceding exploration of the development of the modern religious context may at time have flirted with the tangential, I also believe that it shows the complications inherent in the present day Church's position. The 'tight vs. loose' state regulation envisaged by Stark⁴² has developed decidedly for the 'loose', and such a situation, while certainly, and even necessarily, tenable, also creates some considerable difficulties for the Church. These difficulties seem to run the gamut from cultural ones, to philosophical, to economic, to name only a few. Also, as Roger Beck observed of the Roman Empire, and as we might likewise do with respect to our own time, the state is active in the marketplace,⁴³ peddling oftentimes in favor of whichever 'theism,' religious or otherwise, enables the community to prosper. This then offers us space to briefly mention and discuss here another key difference between the modern age and the second century: the general lack of a religiously invested and monarchical power structure.

This point may be on some levels an obvious one, and one which might seem trivial at a first glance, but which ultimately proves to have farther reaching consequences than one might first consider. It is worth noting that in the modern West, the culture as a whole does not have an overarching monarch or oligarchic body that can be appealed to. As we will later expand on in chapter two, the addressees of Christian apologies to pagans were either emperors, or in some cases the Senate as a whole; the important thing

⁴² Beck 234, cf. also Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 194-5.

⁴³ Beck, 242.

to take away from this is that no such body or figure exists in the modern age. There does not seem to be any singular court which one could appeal to in order to be heard in the same way as the second century apologists were able to do. While certainly scholars, like Jörg Ulrich,⁴⁴ have argued that in some cases the apologies were more open letters than specifically addressed documents, it is still worthwhile to note that the modern mode of discourse does not have a congruent addressee to which apologies might appeal. The public sphere and the diffusion of power is in most cases simply too diffuse to allow for this concept to translate over. Instead, one could argue the approach has become more a matter of submitting an idea into the public forum via one of any number of media channels, and fostering it from there. This notion of how and where one might, with legitimacy, insert an idea into the public sphere, and do so in a manner which finds root in modern people, directs us towards a brief discussion of how the public sphere of today operates and what expectations exist for religious institutions operating within the sphere.

Given this context, let us extend our examination of the present-day state of affairs a little longer, and in so doing examine the extent to which the institutions of power extant in the modern day endeavor to affect and succeed in affecting the ambient religious tone of our society. In addressing this notion at this stage of our contextualization, comparisons between the ancient and modern context will be made when it is meet to do so, identifying differences and similarities when appropriate. This work will continue to prepare us for the work of chapter three in analyzing to what extent the tools of the ancient apologists can speak to the modern Church.

⁴⁴ Ulrich, 30.

Thomas Harrison examines the geopolitical and historical aspect of how the ancient might inform the modern by attempting to answer the question “can an understanding of ancient imperialism cast light on contemporary experience?”⁴⁵ Though he calls the notion that America is the modern day successor to Rome a cliché, Harrison’s arguments seem to indicate that it is a cliché with merit rather than being simply a tired observation. Harrison argues for “the influential position that ancient history has had on US policy,”⁴⁶ citing examples such as the ‘shock and awe tactics’ of the Iraq War as a (sloppy) attempt at mirroring Roman showcasing of military might, and also for the benevolent hegemony as a front for self-interest.⁴⁷ In Harrison’s account here, we find a number of different tools which prove useful in our contextualization process. In the first place, Harrison’s thesis itself provides fertile ground for analysis of another key difference between the ancient culture and the modern: the relative relationships both eras have with things of antiquity and things that are new.

We have already seen from Fredriksen that the ancients were a culture prepared to defer greatly to a given sect if it could demonstrate a certain amount of antiquity. Likewise, Harrison’s thesis mentioned in the previous paragraph seems to suggest that there is a modern tendency which attempts to connect events in the present to respectable figures or societies from the past. However, the work of Eric Hobsbawm suggests that in many cases, novelties attempt to somehow participate in the historical continuities and traditions out of which they spring. His observation is significant in that it denotes a

⁴⁵ Thomas Harrison, “Ancient and Modern Imperialism” *Greece and Rome* 55, no. 1 (2008): 13.

⁴⁶ Harrison, 15.

⁴⁷ Harrison, 14 & 16 respectively.

tension prevalent in the modern age between a liberation from vestiges of a “medieval” past, but at the same time a desire to preserve continuity with it. He uses the language of grafting novel elements onto old ones, or the idea of adapting old traditions to new forms,⁴⁸ but maintains that “novelty is no less novel for being able to dress up easily as antiquity.”⁴⁹ This statement is quite telling in as much as it balances that aforementioned tension, acknowledging the novelty of various practices, beliefs and institutions as extant, even in the midst of adhering them to more ancient traditions. If his insights are correct, Hobsbawm suggests that even when “ancient materials [are] used to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes,”⁵⁰ it is, in many cases, a use that superficially reimagines a link for convenience. This not to say that there is no continuity between past and present structures, but rather that the simple presence of a perceived continuity may be only an intellectual costume.

From this reading of Hobsbawm, I would suggest that his application of novelty vis-à-vis tradition clarifies the social sphere entered into by the apologist. The desire for novelty is present, even though it might be superficially suggesting continuity with a much older tradition. Hobsbawm suggests that these patterns of novelty arose when “the nineteenth-century liberal ideology of social change systematically failed to provide for the social and authority ties taken for granted in earlier societies, and created voids which

⁴⁸ It is worth noting here, that in some ways this thesis is a demonstration of Hobsbawm’s conjecture under discussion here, aiming to find ways which the modern apologetic project can adapt and/or accommodate the work done by apologists from earlier in the continuity.

⁴⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 5.

⁵⁰ Hobsbawm, 6.

might have to be filled by invented practices.”⁵¹ In other words, the practices newly developed come in some part from the inability of the modern order to account for social stabilizers which were at in place in the past. To this we might also suggest the converse that it likewise comes from a failure of those older structures to fully adapt to the newer ideologies and changes. As a result of these processes, the development of various novelties serves as a way to spackle over aspects of life which do not fully cohere together, and over time runs the risk of becoming something of an end in itself, or at least as a measure which possesses its own authority rather than sharing it with other factors.

This relationship between novelty and antiquity is therefore a complex one, but it seems one which bends more in the direction of novelty rather than antiquity. In clarifying this stance, I do wish to point out that several fields have identified a human tendency to yearn for the way life was in the past, from psychology’s ‘rosy retrospection’⁵² to postcolonialism’s conception of a diasporic people longing for the mythical homeland.⁵³ However, the specific bias I am referring to in acknowledging Roman bias for antiquity is a prioritization or preference granted to a given institution or belief *because of its age and longevity* and a corollary suspicion of newer ideas and structures. It seems that the modern world does not suffer from such a compunction, or rather that it suffers in the opposite direction; the modern era is suspicious of traditional

⁵¹ Hobsbawm, 8.

⁵² For a definition and the coinage of this term see Terence R. Mitchell and Leigh Thompson, "A theory of temporal adjustments of the evaluation of events: Rosy Prospection & Rosy Retrospection" in *Advances in Managerial Cognition and Organizational Information-Processing* ed. Chuck Stubbart, James R. Meindl and Joseph Francis Allen Porac, (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press), 85. And see for an application and discussion of the term Donald A. Norman, "THE WAY I SEE IT: Memory Is More Important than Actuality." *Interactions* 16, no. 2 (2009): 24-26.

⁵³ See Ronald Charles, *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 128.

institutions which stretch back more than a few hundred years, while alternately demonstrating a preference for things seen as new, ‘progressive,’ or otherwise modern.

There are a number of places one could turn to in order to support this claim. In a colloquial sense, there have been some suggestions that the Church is seen as ‘outdated’ or somehow inherently backwards in their thinking. This is the application that we see in Muldoon when he cites ‘objections’ to the Church, saying “the Church is out of touch; it is a medieval construct with antiquated sensibilities and byzantine practices.”⁵⁴ We could also turn to the issue from an ecclesiastical standpoint and find some evidence for such a claim as well from no less than St. John XXIII’s application of *aggiornamento*—or updating—to the Church via Vatican II. While one does not wish to proof-text or extrapolate more from a singular term than it was originally designed to carry, it is also important to note that such a term does seem to legitimately carry with it a sense of *need* for update, and thus a connotation that some aspects of the Church did/do not meet the needs and standards of a modern Catholic.

Lastly as a continuation of sourcing this claim, I would like to bring in a source framed more as pop-theology rather than the same from a more strictly scholarly background, I would offer sections of C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*, and specifically that found in Letter 25. Much of the whole of the letter is framed in the context of dealing with human beings who experience things within the bounds of time and as such the infernal exploitation of the balance between the opposing poles of “Same Old Thing” and that of a dynamic world filled with (potential for) change. Screwtape

⁵⁴ Muldoon, 3.

culminates his advice on temptation via distorting these rhythms by saying “For the descriptive adjective ‘unchanged’ we have substituted the emotional adjective ‘stagnant.’”⁵⁵ This passage of *Screwtape* outlines and communicates the notion of a disordered need for novelty even in works whose audience is not strictly scholars and clergy, but rather for the inquisitive lay person. Lewis, St. John XXIII, and Muldoon all suggest through their language that the modern individual is a creature who values novelty, perhaps much more so than they value antiquity. We may then extrapolate that the modern individual is, in a sense, tugged into an infatuation that seems to run opposite to the second century, preferring newer currents of thought, prevalent at the moment, and sometimes ignoring or disparaging sources which do not have such novelty to them.⁵⁶

With this point made, let us briefly return to Harrison’s discussion of the links between modernity and antiquity, specifically here as regards the potential for ‘civic gods’ in the modern age. Leaning on Edward Said, Harrison claims that “empire was founded on broader education/ideological foundations”⁵⁷ and borrowing from Tom Holland’s history of the Persian wars, Harrison makes another claim for both ancient and modern empires that “we see a model for the way in which empires tend to project their values as universal.”⁵⁸ Certainly we can see this in the American grand narrative’s invocation of the ideals of freedom,⁵⁹ and one might also add democracy as a corollary to

⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 2001), 139.

⁵⁶ Further exploration of these ideas can also be found in Muldoon’s discussion of the relative novelty, yet popularity of the ‘spiritual but not religious’ demographic (Muldoon, 12), and further Letter 10 of *Screwtape Letters*.

⁵⁷ Harrison, 13.

⁵⁸ Harrison, 16.

⁵⁹ Harrison, 4.

this. It bears examining at this point to what extent these concepts, and possibly others, have been situated as the *de facto* gods of the age, demanding a kind of obligatory devotion in a way not unlike the Roman cults discussed in Fredriksen.

The ‘gods’ of the rational (liberal) agent and of the market, are in some sense birthed as twins in the early period of modernity. Jürgen Habermas observes that “Connected with the conception of . . . constitutional law is another more general one: the emergence through differentiation of an economy controlled through market mechanisms from the premodern orders of political domination.”⁶⁰ For Habermas, it seems that the rational agent which of necessity must undergird a society based in constitutional law, is also part of the progenitor of the emergent capitalist marketplace, a marketplace now rooted at the heart of Western democratic society. Indeed, Habermas makes observations which might well be seen as the work of Grotius run to its natural ends, stating “Citizens in [a democratic society] share a commitment to the resolution of problems of collective choice through public reasoning, and regard their basic institutions as legitimate insofar as they establish a framework for free public deliberation;”⁶¹ Habermas’ belief is that, as members of a society based in liberalism and the rational agent, that we deem legitimate those institutions which allow for the public to reason the various merits of any given idea or policy. As such, there is an implicit expectation that legitimacy arises from the will of the people rather than through any other source.

⁶⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”, in *Habermas in the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1966), 432.

⁶¹ Habermas, 446.

The belief that the rational agent is the arbiter of legitimacy presupposes that all persons have access to the public discourse as well as the means to participate in it, but this presupposition may not be true in all cases. Habermas notes that in some cases, the media⁶² does not allow for debate, not because it silences one side over another, but because the debate is never brought to the public in the first place.⁶³ This leads to “a political public sphere characterized by at least two cross-cutting processes: the communicative generation of legitimate power on one hand, and the manipulative deployment of media power to procure mass loyalty, consumer demand, and ‘compliance’ with systemic imperatives on the other.”⁶⁴ Habermas’ insight here gets at the crux of a significant problem of modernity: a society founded on legitimacy by debate and consent is at the same time given to a form of media unprecedented in history and able to project a message monolithically, as if consensus had already been achieved, and thus sidestepping any possibility that it might be questioned.

Through the means mentioned above, it then seems that the force of the rational agent can be made to serve the market, and the market in turn creates an atmosphere of pietistic compliance for the rational agent to adhere to, allowing for public devotion to the civil religion. And it is with these two ‘gods’, the individual rational agent and the market, that present day religion must inevitably tangle in order to garner a place in the

⁶² We can construe media here as either media in a nominal sense, that is media as the actual means of communication, such as television, web articles, social media etc., or in an institutional sense referring to specific bodies such as *CNN*, *Disney* or *AOL/Time Warner*. In either context I would argue that Habermas’ observation holds true as sometimes the very forms of communication quash certain voices, while in other instances the institutions are reticent to lend a megaphone to those same voices.

⁶³ Habermas, 437.

⁶⁴ Habermas, 452.

public sphere. We can underline this distinction between the modern civic religion and that of Christian religion if we resort to the language we had earlier seen from Fredriksen. It is to these cultural, or ethnically Western ‘gods’ of modernity one has the first obligation, though there is no restriction on having others besides, such as devotion to Jesus Christ. It seems that the rational agent and the market are certainly not exclusivist, but at the same time they, and the culture they abide in, demand first service, even at the expense of whatever other devotions one has in life.

It is in a realization of this nature, that the modern age has a plurality of belief but with an expectation of a specific primacy within those beliefs, that in some ways replaces Christianity in the position it occupied in the second century and which may well suggest that the apologetics of that time would be able to find a place in a modern day discourse. The Christian doctrine of the present day still holds to an absolute claim to truth and continues to mold its adherents towards living a life based on that of Christ. In this sense, Christians of today continue to come into conflict with the structures of the world in service to the ‘gods’ of the era. As a result of encountering these structures, there exists a need not unlike that of the second century, to establish a dialogue, and however absolute the claims of the Christian faith may be, to likewise be open to deep conversation and more than a little institutional change.

Yet perhaps one of the best measures of comparison is an examination of the present state of the civic religion. Fredriksen’s observation regarding the *pax deorum* may be seen in Polybius’ *Histories* as he claims:

The most important difference for the better which the Roman commonwealth appears to me to display is in their religious beliefs. For I conceive that what in

other nations is looked upon as a reproach, I mean a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman commonwealth together.⁶⁵

Since Polybius spells out fairly clearly that Roman success can be attributed to their proper respect for the gods, so one must ask if there is a comparable ideology or superstructure which represents a modern point of comparison. Certainly one could be tempted to hold up the aforementioned gods of liberty and democracy, as Harrison does, or perhaps follow Habermas and defer to the rational agent and the market. As we have seen, arguments can and have been made for each position. We have seen Harrison previously articulate the former stance and he is not alone in his observations. However other scholars we will now turn to, such as Timothy Shah and Charles Taylor, also have similarly investigated and expounded on the notion of the development, or even transferal, of the civic religion from one which is theologically based to one which is rooted in individual rationality. The nature of this change, understanding it, where it came from, and where it has the potential to go, is an important aspect of the contextualization process in this chapter, and in the following treatment we will gain a sense of just how fundamentally these changes affected and continue to affect the world we live in today.

Shah leans heavily on analyzing Hugo Grotius and the manner in which he worked to reconcile the various Christian factions of post-Reformation Europe. Shah says of Grotius' efforts that they "sought to do nothing less than to give Christianity a new center of gravity, replacing dogma and creed with a morality oriented towards social

⁶⁵ Polybius. *Histories*. trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. (New York: Macmillan. 1889), 385.
http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/polybius_six.pdf

peace.”⁶⁶ Shah’s argument stems from the idea that Grotius’ aim was not to reconcile the tenets of Catholicism and the varying forms of Protestantism, but rather to set up a structure where the commonalities were focused on, and social harmony emphasized. While few people could argue against this goal, it is likewise important to recognize the fundamental shift in perception that this structure precipitated. This served to recreate Christianity as a kind of code of ethics and morality, as opposed to a dogmatic system of belief. In doing this, Grotius starts the modern West down the Kantian path of bracketing that which does not fit this system, but rather allowing it only as the purview of private individuals rather than that of the community as a whole.

Taylor traces this line of thinking back even further than Shah, arguing that seeds of Western liberalism exist in the Cartesian notion of the rational agent. He says of such an agent that “The disengaged disciplined stance to self and society has become part of the essential defining repertory of the modern identity.”⁶⁷ This is the imagined figure to which Grotius appeals, hoping that the rational agent will understand that the need for social cohesion despite religious difference is a heavier weight on the balance than any creed or discussion of who is damned or not. However Taylor also points out that this rational agent comes into existence in the zeitgeist of the culture at a considerable price. Taylor observes that “the disengaged stance also leads to the drawing of boundaries and a withdrawal from certain modes of intimacy,”⁶⁸ and the implications for such a bounding

⁶⁶ Timothy Shah, “Making the World Safe For Liberalism: From Grotius to Rawls,” *The Political Quarterly*, Vol.71 (2000): 126, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=8f32c5d3-24b3-4ff0-bcd5-34df392bfe5a%40sessionmgr4004&vid=1&hid=4206>

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2007), 136.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 137.

off are significant. The boundaries drawn by this philosophy are ones which, to borrow the cliché, make islands of men, trafficking interaction only across constructed bridges, created with the cooperation and consent of other islanders. The result is a rejection of communal or even interpersonal intimacy; however, it might be counterpointed that the desire for such modes of intimacy, is a partial impetus for the continued existence and growth of religious devotion and practice.⁶⁹

In creating a brief point of connection between this era and that of early Christianity, we might see this rational agent as something which is a tenet of the civic religion, if not a ‘god’ itself within it. Turning back to Fredriksen, she makes the clear case that religion in antiquity was an inherently collective affair. She observes that “Ancient religion was intrinsically communal and public: performance-indexed piety.”⁷⁰ Likewise, Taylor puts the rational agent within the context of the communal obligation, stating that “This is the persona we project towards other, and [others] towards us, and in this mutual projection we help each other to see ourselves as having attained this rational distance, and hence help each other to live up to this exalted ideal.”⁷¹ The implication here is that religion and specifically civil religion is a public act with a public element; whereas in antiquity it was a communal project of worship and festivals and the like, in the present day, the civil religion has an inherent aspect of bounding one person off from another, done so with mutual support, so that each individual might best act as a rational

⁶⁹ See as examples of this Muldoon’s discussion of liturgical communion and community (Muldoon 130-131), as well as his rebellion against the specific notion of isolated spirituality (Muldoon 69-70).

⁷⁰ Fredriksen, 590.

⁷¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 141.

agent unto him/herself, and thereby make their choices through their own processes.

Paradoxically, the communal nature of people seems warded off by the community itself.

Additionally, an equally convincing and prevalent civic religion is observed by Tim Muldoon, who states: “People live in a world governed by market forces. They understand that they must compete on every level, and that they are measured by their market power.”⁷² Muldoon’s observation on the pervasiveness of market forces, characterizing them as present at every level is, at the same time, highlighted by his insight that the pervasiveness inspires action, which he defines by calling it competition. If we align such an observation with Fredriksen’s characterization of ancient religion as action-focused and customary, or to reuse her language, as “intrinsically communal and public: performance-indexed piety,”⁷³ one might be hard pressed to find a more pervasive modern civic religion than that of capitalism and the market.

Section 1.3 – The Present State of Apologetics and its Vocabulary

With the conclusion of this examination we come to a state of fully crossing the bridge from the ancient world to examine the modern context. This section, in like manner with the previous ones, investigate modern voices like Pope Francis, Alasdair MacIntyre, and C.C. Pecknold, with a similar eye to establish a modern understanding of the place and movement of Christianity. Further exploration of Tim Muldoon’s inquiry into communication of the Gospel in a postmodern era will also be incorporated as a barometer of both the modern religious milieu and the efficacy of current practices. By

⁷² Muldoon, 130.

⁷³ Fredriksen, 590.

examining all these voices, we will explore the present-day discussion with respect to what the Church can and should be doing; the lens here, as it was in the former part, will be with an eye towards apologetic writing as expressed in content, rhetoric, and theology. By mixing all of these voices together, both ancient and modern, the initial phase of the thesis hopes to find common cultural, political, economic, and religious ground between the second century and the 21st century.

Part of the apologetic debate regarding the role of the Church in the present day is characterized in what has been termed the “Benedict Option” and the “Dominic Option.” Both take their names from the titular saint and in a sense attempt to carry on the perceived vision of Church each saint embodied. The Benedict Option, as per St. Benedict, seems to advocate for a kind of cloistering movement, a retreat out of the world so as not to become corrupted by it. The term was coined out of Alasdair MacIntyre’s book on moral philosophy, *After Virtue*, which MacIntyre concludes saying:

A crucial turning point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintains of that *imperium*. What they set themselves to achieve instead... was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness... We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.⁷⁴

MacIntyre’s outline here describes a community retreating from the dying *imperium* in which it finds itself in order to form a new community which will preserve morality for posterity; in more ecclesial language, this presents the Church as a monastery, cloistered

⁷⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 263.

off away from the world and distinctly separate from it. That is not to say totally without contact (indeed such a thing would seem impossible practically, and antithetical to the Great Commission⁷⁵ doctrinally), but certainly setting up the Church perhaps a more monkish and discrete entity than it exists as today. It is a withdrawal from the culture wars mentality and a seemingly equal withdrawal from the role of ‘Church as conscience’ in favor of establishing a guard around morality to protect it from barbarian meddling.

In contrast to such a proposal, C.C. Pecknold has argued for what Michael W. Hannon⁷⁶ has termed the Dominic Option. Again, leaning on the legacy of the titular saint, the Dominic Option flows outward towards the world and filters in through it. Pecknold describes it as “a plausible image of a ‘contrast society’ that is very much engaged with the world—an evangelistic witness which is joyful, intellectually serious, expansive, and charitable.”⁷⁷ It is Pecknold who describes the Benedict Option as one associated with *withdrawal*, whereas one might characterize Pecknold’s Dominic Option as one of *engagement* which seeks to be transformative of the *imperium* rather than excusing oneself from it.

Indeed, one individual who can be rather distinctly construed as favoring the Dominic Option is the present head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis devotes considerable space (the entirety of the first chapter!) to the Church’s missionary role, and the inherent notion of being ‘sent out,’ of

⁷⁵ Matthew 28:19-20.

⁷⁶ Michael W. Hannon, “The Dominic Option,” *First Things*, Jul 15, 2013, <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2013/07/the-dominic-option>.

⁷⁷ C.C. Pecknold, “The Dominican Option,” *First Things*, Oct 6, 2014, <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/10/the-dominican-option>

going out into the world rather than retreating from it. Francis describes the demands of the Gospel as “[inviting] us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others, and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.”⁷⁸ Francis states clearly that the goal of modern Christianity should be one of engagement rather than withdrawal. In fact he goes on to offer perhaps a more damning indictment of any ecclesiastical retreat when he states: “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”⁷⁹ Francis here not only encourages an advance into the world, where one risks the corrupting dirt and wounds of engagement, but he also characterizes the attempt to cling to an internal security as ‘unhealthy.’ While certainly Francis, as do Hannon and Pecknold, has no problem with the individual being consecrated with religious vows to an individual Benedictine community, he seems as certainly opposed to the notion that such a path should be chosen for the whole Church.

Finally, as almost a brief addendum on the preceding conversation, I would like to mention here that this contextualization process, and the process of analysis operating within the thesis as a whole, will be enriched with a borrowing of terminology from (postcolonial subaltern studies, specifically the notion of *subalternity* and that of the *hybrid*. In the following chapter these terms will aid in our understanding of the in-between space inhabited by the second century apologists and the relative place of the Church at the time; as a result of this analysis, the third chapter will investigate if such terms as applied vis-à-vis the second century are still applicable in the modern context.

⁷⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (Washington DC: USCCB Communications, 2013), 20-21.

⁷⁹ Pope Francis, 25.

Therefore, in the interest of being able to deploy these terms directly in the coming chapters, some small discussion here seems appropriate to define them and outline the greater function they will serve.

The postcolonial subaltern, coined in this sense by Ranajit Guha and notably expanded on by Gayatri Spivak is used in order to denote “the many different peoples who did not compromise the colonial elite. These might include the lesser rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants, and upper-middle-class peasants.”⁸⁰ While it is fairly easy to see how the Christian Church in the time of those like Tertullian and Justin Martyr was a patchwork of subaltern groups from the various echelons of Roman society, it will behoove the analyses in subsequent chapters to see how, or indeed if, the defensive subaltern mindset at work in the writings of the early fathers has any effect on the direction of thinking and practice in the present day Church. In the chapter immediately following, we will undertake an examination of this nature and investigate if subalternity expressed in this fashion is something which the second century apologists express. Furthermore in the third chapter, a section of our analysis will also investigate if the Church can and/or does see itself still as a subaltern entity in the world, and should this prove to be the case, what consequences this might have for the apologetic mission.

The postcolonial hybrid is something certainly related to the subaltern but which meets with the challenges of a given social and political station in a way that is not true of all subalterns. Viewed through the writings of those like Ronald Charles, and through him Homi Bhabha, the hybrid represents a borrowing from two (or more) different

⁸⁰ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000), 109. See also Guha and Spivak’s *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988).

backgrounds and work as a potential go between for the respective groups they occupy. Bhabha defines it as “a subject that inhabits the rim of an ‘in-between’ reality,”⁸¹ and Charles builds on this, taking the hybrid notion towards the early Christian context of Paul’s writings and missionary work. Charles calls the task of the early Christians one of being able “to manage living between [their] socioreligious ideals and [their] social realities.”⁸² The task of this vocabulary is similar to that of the use of subalternity. It again seems easy to apply such a term to the second century apologists to be discussed, all of whom were converts to the faith rather than born into it, and we will investigate if and how this kind of in-between reality is visible in their work. Likewise, in the third chapter we will investigate if the term hybrid is applicable to the modern Church and current methods of apologetics, and based on that investigation, what consequences may well ensue for the apologetic mission as a whole.

The work of postcolonial studies, with respect to notions such as *subaltern* and *hybridity*, seems particularly helpful for addressing and examining the context of early Christianity under the Roman Empire; though as we will see, in some ways the government structures of the Roman Empire were not the only force which asserted their power on the nascent Christian movement. Postcolonial studies will, however, be only a small facet within the overall process. The aim of this initial mention of it is to establish points of compatibility and similarity between the ancient and modern contexts. The overall objective in using this lens will be to contextualize Christianity in the ancient world as one couched in imperial trappings and investigate how Christianity sought not

⁸¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 19.

⁸² Charles, 45.

only to survive in such a context, but also to somehow communicate with the ruling hegemony while being relegated to a subaltern ‘Other’ status. The implication of this analysis contrasts points where Christianity might justly claim that status, and where such a claim no longer holds up to scrutiny in the context of the modern age.

The contextualization process in this chapter has attempted to lay a foundation upon which the following chapters intend to build. The norms which govern the modern age and the ancient world are significant factors which will ultimately shape the tools and rhetoric used by the apologists operating within such a context. While there exists a great deal of similarity between the ancient and the modern eras, such as fundamental religious pluralism and suspicion of the Church, there are also significant differences to be aware of. The establishment of a discretely secular society rooted in individual conscience and rational agency is a matter of significant importance with respect to how religious entities can relate to the world at large. While the underlying assumptions of such a philosophy are certainly different from anything we might expect to find in the second century, there is a great deal of merit in attempting to look at the apologetic fathers’ efforts to deal with the ambient philosophy of their own era. With the question of what constitutes useful legitimizing rhetoric in a plural society, and the question of how to deal appropriately with the common philosophical and social norms of the day, we now turn our investigation to analyzing directly the works of the second century apologists.

Chapter Two: Analysis of Apologetic Works

This second chapter of the thesis will look into the early apologetic works directly. Justin Martyr and Tertullian will act as our prominent figures in this respect, though supplemented at times with input from their relative, though less prolific, contemporary, Athenagoras of Athens. The process of examination will first investigate directly the content each author chose to incorporate into his apologetic works as well as what probable rationale prompted its inclusion. Indeed for many of these Fathers, the rationale of *why* the apology itself is being undertaken at all is quite simple: to gainsay a given attack on Christianity by the Roman establishment or by one or another Christian group ultimately deemed heretical.¹ However, by examining both the *specific* content, included or omitted, as well as the rhetoric utilized to discuss that same content, one can gain a more nuanced understanding of the nature of the apologetic argument and the specific defense and/or critique being mounted. We will also employ some shades of subaltern analysis in this chapter, examining the apologists as, at least in their own minds, writing as subaltern theologians within the imperial context.

The second phase of examination will look specifically at how these apologetic Fathers viewed, employed and otherwise dealt with the prevailing philosophical trends of their day. Living in a culture steeped in the Greco-Roman philosophies, the apologists

¹ It bears mentioning in line with current scholarship that in dealing with these individuals, particularly the pre-Nicene voices, one must be cautious of speaking of a unified or coherent Christianity, or in some cases indeed speaking of a 'Christianity' or 'heresy' at all. Many of these distinctions are distinctions made after the fact, or made by the orthodoxy which ultimately succeeded in any given dispute. ***For the purposes of this project, the term Christian will denote any person or group which identifies as such, professing some kind of belief with regards to the life and teachings of Jesus.*** Any more specific and more sectarian will be defined as such (e.g. Marcionites, Montanists, Donatists, pro-Nicaean, etc.)

would have likely found entirely escaping such modes of thought to be an impossible task. Scholars such as C. J. de Vogel have delved into Justin's relationship with his professed philosophical heritage, and Eric Osborn, and Pap Levente have debated and analyzed Tertullian's approach to philosophy and Christianity. By investigating the points where the Fathers draw on philosophical terms, the points where they distance themselves from such terms, and the subtlety (or not) they use in walking this fine line, one can also gain an understanding of how primary voices in second century Christianity sought to deal with the thought and teachings of the 'secular'² world they inhabited. This second phase of the chapter will also serve to transition us into the final chapter, wherein we will analyze how the voices of these apologists might likewise speak to a modern context beset by similar, though not identical, challenges.

Section 2.1 – Argument from Antiquity and Ethnicity

In our chapter one discussion of Fredriksen's work, it was demonstrated that some monotheistic religions in the Roman Empire, such as Judaism, received religious and cultural allowance from the Romans because of traditional antiquity and ethnic importance. For the sake of finding some protection under such cultural allowances, we find arguments professing Christianity's possession of these traits within the context of

² My use of secular here, and largely throughout the rest of this chapter will be admittedly anachronistic. I am of course using the term in its modern sense of being outside the bounds of religious rule or otherwise unconnected with a religious perspective. Obviously as we have already seen from texts like Fredriksen and the apologists themselves, very little in the world of antiquity was disconnected in such a way. I am simply using the term to denote currents of thought which come from outside the burgeoning Church; some coming from state sources, or philosophical schools or even just cultural modes of living. It is in this sense that I would argue that secular is appropriate in that it is disconnected from the particular form of religion addressed by this thesis. For the purposes of clarity though, I intend to put quotations around the word in each instance of its use with this meaning.

apologetic arguments. Indeed, both Justin and Tertullian³ take pains in order to establish Christianity as having ancient ties, doing so through an appeal to the antiquity of the prophetic Old Testament writings. Tertullian asks and answers his own question on this point, inquiring “Which of your poets, which of your philosophers have not drank from the fountain of the prophets?” and then replying “It is from these sacred sources likewise that your philosophers have refreshed their thirsty, inquisitive spirits.”⁴ Tertullian’s statements have a twofold implication. First of all, they establish the temporal primacy of the prophetic texts, given that the Greco-Roman philosophers draw from them, therefore implying that the prophetic texts must have been written first. However, this also seems to imply, as will become important in the second phase of this chapter, that the prophets not only have a temporal claim to primacy but also one towards metaphysical primacy as well. Tertullian’s words suggest that it is the prophetic scriptures, not philosophical texts and treatises, which refresh a spirit thirsting after the truth.

Justin of a similar mind with respect to his attempts to establish antiquity. He makes the claim that Plato’s statement ‘To him who chooses belongs the guilt, but in God there is no guilt,’ comes from Plato’s reading of Moses; Justin goes on to say that, “Moses is more ancient than all the Greek authors and everything the philosophers and

³ The omission of Athenagoras here is simply due to the fact that Athenagoras devotes very little if any real space in his *Embassy for the Christians* to any discussion of the antiquity of Christianity. His purview rests more in establishing Christian truths while being supported by figures from pagan antiquity. As we will see, Athenagoras is much more interested in pointing out the inconsistencies between what the Roman priests call ‘gods’ and what their premier philosophers have called God. In this context there is room to argue that Athenagoras, rather than leaning on the ancient heritage of Christianity, instead argues for the relative newness of the Greco-Roman religious practices. If this case is made, a consequential result might be that the Romans do not have grounds for criticizing Christianity based on its recent birth; such a conjecture though is beyond the scope of the present paper.

⁴ Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), Ch. 47.

poets said in speaking about the immortality of the soul, or retribution after death, or speculation on celestial matters, or other similar doctrines, they took from the prophets as the source of information.”⁵ Indeed, Justin devotes the whole of chapters 59 and 60 of his *1 Apology* to the linking of Plato and Mosaic thought, yet with the insistence on the temporal primacy of Moses and on the notion that Plato did not fully or accurately understand what he was borrowing from Moses and the prophets. Note as well that this also has the implication of Moses’ metaphysical primacy as well, as Justin asserts that Plato borrows ideas directly from Moses’ writings.

It is prudent to point out that Tertullian and Justin offer no real proof that the scholars of Greece were in any way linked to the prophets (that is to say some kind of narrative or claim that Plato or Homer travelled to Jerusalem and studied under the Jews, or vice versa). The real argument being made by both Justin and Tertullian is a *temporal* link rather than what we might today call a *causal* one. Tertullian offers the following claim to the antiquity of Moses:

If you happen to have heard of a certain Moses, I speak first of him: he is as far back as the Argive Inachus; by nearly four hundred years... he precedes Danaus, your most ancient name, while he antedates by a millennium the death of Priam. I might affirm, too, that he is five hundred years earlier than Homer, and have supporters of that view.⁶

⁵ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), Ch. 44.

⁶ Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 19; one conversant in the mythology of ancient Rome might note that of the names mentioned by Tertullian, only Homer is one for whom any date can be produced with any remote reliability. Inachus, Danaus, and Priam all featuring more in the tales of myths and gods rather than in more exact histories. Even using central events in classical histories, such as the Trojan War or the Persian invasion of Greece by Xerxes I, to make some guess at a timeline, one sees that the classical historians have a wide berth of dating for such events; again we must consider that Tertullian is not attempting to make an argument for fact or precision of dates, but rather one for antiquity with his point being that Moses’ life occurred before the lives of these other figures venerated by the Greco-Roman consciousness.

Notice in this that Tertullian himself acknowledges that the precise dating of Moses may vary by his inclusion of the phrase “have supporters of that view,” suggesting that there are varying contemporary schools of thought as to the dating of the life of Moses; however his main point comes across clearly: Moses predates many of the figures of antiquity which the Romans hold as part of their lineage and history. And with this claim comes the corollary that if this figure of the Christian religion predates those who were seminal in the founding and strengthening of the Roman way of life, then Christianity must also have as much of a claim, if not indeed more of one, to its respectability, prestige and most of all, its unmolested existence as a religion.

Justin’s claim is even more laconic in how it presents itself and plays even more fast and loose with the points of reference he uses for the purposes of dating. Justin’s ‘proof’ is simply that “Moses then, who was the first of the Prophets...”⁷ Justin centers on the temporal primacy of Moses among the prophets, and pairs this with the notion that the prophets who foretold the coming of Jesus were “first 5000 years before [the birth of Christ], and again 3000, then 2000, then 1000, and yet again 800; for in the succession of generations prophets after prophets arose.”⁸ Justin, unlike Tertullian, gives no historical events or specific figures to underline his claim, and admittedly, his content in this section comes off as more of a proclamation rather than an attempt to convince the skeptical; however the meat of his argument is the same as Tertullian: the prophets are much older than the earliest ancestral figures in the Greco-Roman tradition, and therefore the Christian religion must be respected on the grounds of the antiquity of its heritage.

⁷ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, Ch. 32.

⁸ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, Ch. 31.

We should note here that this thesis makes no attempt to prove the veracity of the claims made by Justin and Tertullian, as such proofs are beyond the scope of the present inquiry. Furthermore, any such proofs regarding the factuality of Justin and Tertullian's claims on antiquity are, in both this thesis and in the respective apologies, ultimately irrelevant to the more significant point at hand: the investigation of why, in the minds of these two defenders of the faith, such an effort is made to define Christianity as participant in an ancient tradition. The answer seems to stem from Christianity's attempt to fulfill its need to legitimize itself in the eyes of the Roman establishment. The best hope of a nascent movement in the Roman period, especially one which threatened to upset the social order as it existed at the time, was to find refuge in the innate Roman respect for antiquity. Indeed, this seems to be an example of what we might call today "second century politics of legitimization," working within the narrative grooves created by the ways in which Romans anchored their imagination, philosophy and history.

As I showed in my earlier engagement of Fredriksen, a key factor in why Judaism was able to operate as it did within the Roman Empire was due in no small part to Roman respect for its nationality and antiquity. The Romans were willing to accept Jewish practices and traditions because of their age and their role in the heritage of that particular group of people. What we see here in Justin and Tertullian is their attempt to benefit from the religious roots of Christianity and claim asylum within the Roman tolerance of Jewish belief and antiquity. Practically and politically speaking, the pains taken by both of these apologists are an attempt at self-preservation via the claim that Christianity should be respected as the fulfillment of an ancient tradition going back centuries, rather than perceived as a suspect class of what might have been thought of as a "new age" religion.

However in the Roman context, it was not only the age of a given belief that allowed for its toleration, but likewise that it was part of the cultural practice of that nation or tribe. In other words, the ethnicity of religion carries a weight similar to its age. At this point then, one could move down one of two ways of thinking. Potentially, one could suggest that there exists what we might call the path of apologetic ignorance and/or apathy. In accepting this method of thinking we assume that Justin and Tertullian either did not know the rationale behind their culture well enough to see the need to defend Christianity in this way, or they simply felt their argument from antiquity was sufficient and did not care about tending to the side of the argument dealing with heritage. However, given that both men were not only of the educated class of people, but also were both converts *from* a Greco-Roman lifestyle, this hypothesis seems unlikely to find any real traction; it seems reasonable to surmise that during their pre-conversion lives both Justin and Tertullian participated in and understood the implicit social understanding regarding the various theistic and civil cults of their time.

The alternate option, and the one which we will pursue, demands a reading of some of the lengthier parts of their respective apologies in a way that highlights the multifaceted nature of the argumentation and deals with some of the theological claims of Justin and Tertullian more subtly rather than taking them at face value. The challenge faced by both men is to claim a common ethnicity for Christians, yet to argue so from a racial or cultural perspective would be impossible. By their own admission, there is a recognition of the heterogeneous cultural nature of the Christian Church throughout the Roman Empire. Justin frequently mentions the presence of the Church and spreading of

the Christian message, often using the phrase “among [all] the nations”⁹ in his own original writing as well as in his scriptural citations. Likewise Tertullian claims that “we have filled every place among you— cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum,”¹⁰ contrasting it with the image of a single great people of one national identity, such as the Parthians. We can feel confident in the assertion that both apologists knew that arguing for what we might call a ‘homogenous nationalism’ within Christianity is something that would not bear up to scrutiny, yet within their arguments there is an implicit argument for unity of ethnicity folded in amidst their rhetoric.

Both apologists devote considerable time and space arguing against the existence of the various polytheistic entities, and arguing instead in favor of the Christian monotheistic belief. On a surface level this seems a fairly straightforward argument in order to defend one of Christianity’s main tenets against the claims made by those in the Roman establishment, and certainly there is nothing at all wrong, theologically or historically with such an understanding of their arguments. Furthermore the dispute in question also appears to be largely theological in nature, and again, it would be hard to gainsay such an interpretation. However, with the hypothesis in mind that Justin and Tertullian know they must make some kind of argument for the ethnic unity of

⁹ Justin makes use of this phrase or a variation on it no fewer than 10 times without the course of his argument in *1 Apology*. His use, as mentioned in the main body of the text, is both in use of scriptural passages he employs to demonstrate that through Christ the many nations of the world will come to know God, as well as some uses of the phrase in his own analysis and argument. My argument here is that Justin’s relatively prolific use of the phrase is reflective of his understanding of Christianity as a multi-national or multi-cultural project, rather than one such as Judaism, with a very distinct cultural heritage and homeland in the worldly sense.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 37

Christianity, viewing these claims as solely centering on doctrinal or theological argument becomes only a partial understanding of the apologists' words. By investigating these statements with an eye towards their ethnic implications we can peer under the theological surface to come to a fuller understanding of what is being defined.

Justin and Tertullian both make the claim that God is the creator of the world and of all people inhabiting it;¹¹ at the same time, both devote considerable space in their arguments not only refuting charges of atheism because of Christianity's rejection of pagan gods, but also in asserting that there is only the one God, with pagan gods being either at best non-existent or else demons preying on human ignorance and weakness. The logic of this argument provides the ethnic unity that the apologists need to claim what they feel is the respect the Christian movement deserves. For Justin and Tertullian, there is but one God who created and oversees the lives of all people, and then by virtue of that shared Creator, all people who profess a belief in that God are actually of the same ethnicity, whatever geographic or cultural accidents might make it appear otherwise. The logic to this argument is that just as all people of a particular city or nation worship the local gods and that formulates part of their heritage and identity, so the Christians in worshipping their God participate in the same ethnicity, even if they may not share the same culture or customs. Indeed, one could even go further to claim that for Justin and Tertullian, there is no ethnicity at all as all are products of the same Creator. It is in Christianity one that accepts the truth of such a claim, and subsequently realizes that there is only one God and that the various human subdivisions like ethnicity are

¹¹ See Justin's *1 Apology* Ch. 59; *2 Apology* Ch. 4; and Tertullian's *Apology* Ch. 17.

ultimately illusory.¹² This may also explain the mindset which allowed Justin and Tertullian to, in the eyes of outsider Romans, break their ancestral ties and embrace Christianity; it may be reflective of Justin and Tertullian's ability to recapitulate the concept of their cultural self in the greater vision of the Kingdom of God, though admittedly such assertions are conjecture rather than definitively provable.

Again, I feel it is important here to emphasize that this thesis does not make any sort of statement on the factual nature of the assertions made by Justin and Tertullian. Rather, I am proposing a reading of their text which highlights and appreciates the interplay between their apologetics and their cultural norms. This awareness of their ability to alternately work within or rebel against the prevailing modes of thought affecting their world and culture assists in discerning the extent to which such apologists can inform apologetic approaches and methodologies today. The importance of the point previously discussed is that Justin and Tertullian both attempt to give Christianity the grounding it needs both in terms of its ancestral longevity as well as making a claim for a common ethnicity despite the various cultures of its adherents. This grounding would then serve to negate the suspicions placed upon what would be seen by many as a new cult, and instead afford it a place with the other forms of religious practice which were respected and tolerated within the context of the Roman Empire.

¹² One might be inclined to find strains of Galatians 3:28 running throughout this mode of thinking, and it is not without reason to suggest a genealogy for the idea which is birthed from this idea in Pauline theology. If nothing else, Paul's rhetoric provides precedent in the tradition for the possibility of these apologists thinking in the way I have described.

Section 2.2 – Appeals to Authority

A large part of the apologetic effort, however, was not only shrinking the grounds by which Christianity was delegitimized, but also offering what the apologists hoped was a kind of palatable middle ground from which they could build. Appeals to the authority of figures like Plato, Homer, Pythagoras, Socrates and that of other philosophical schools accepted by the Romans, tried to link something that appeared suspect to the Romans (Christians) to forms they could both understand and respect as legitimate (philosophical authorities). This process for the apologists is fundamentally linked to the rhetoric of what the Romans consider to be acceptable and legitimate forms of practice and discourse. One could argue that because of this, there is a sublimation of the radical nature of first-century Christianity in favor of second-century self-preservation. Christianity's legitimization is supported by, and to some degree hangs on, the apologists' ability to speak in the language of the imperial hegemony and through the mouths of the respected intelligentsia in order to gain access to the public forum and articulate the Christian position to their particular audience. We might set this notion over and against Christianity being able to speak on its own terms, whatever that might look like, given that Christian language from its inception, even from the language of the Gospels and epistles, is written using the prevailing language and pomp of the empire.

Leif Vaage recognizes this in his chapter entitled "Why Christianity Succeeded (in) the Roman Empire," and makes a keen observation that in some ways the language used by the early Christians in a rebellious or subversive sense, prolongs the viability of such language and sets Christianity up as a natural successor to the Roman Imperium. He argues that "precisely because [Christian] language of opposition was derived from the

discourse of empire, the long term legacy of such speech could hardly be anything other than a recurrence of the same.”¹³ Vaage’s point here is well made and is worth consideration, as his suggestion that the language used by a group, even in done in rebellion, risks the carrying forward of those same elements. While Vaage recognizes to some extent the necessity of Christianity “‘talking the talk’ of Rome,”¹⁴ he also sees that talk as creating the promise of Christianity’s eventual role as a political force. To some extent, we might call this a kind of victory in as much as it certainly implies and eventual legitimization of Christianity via its linguistic ability; but at the same time, the question hangs overhead, and will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter, of whether or not Christianity really had a chance to speak in any other language, or if the Gospel was somehow subsumed into larger philosophical and political forms of thought.

Suffice it to say for our present focus at least, that the language of early Christianity (and for our purposes, the language of the apologists) in many ways was required to speak with a contemporary vernacular. The early Christian apologists, in an effort to present the case of Christianity to their respective audiences and to gainsay the rival (and ultimately) heretical voices of their times, necessarily spoke in line with the vernacular of their audience. This only stands to reason, as if one wishes to communicate to a particular demographic, one would necessarily have to speak in a way understood by such an audience and address the issues or concerns of that same audience. To this end Justin when speaking with Trypho in the *Dialogue* he says, “But, since I know that all

¹³ Leif Vaage “Why Christianity Succeeded (in) the Roman Empire” in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, ed. Leif Vaage (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 278

¹⁴ Vaage, 255.

you Jews deny the authenticity of these passages, I will not start a discussion about them, but I will limit the controversy to those passages which you admit as genuine.”¹⁵ Here, Justin is speaking of the apocryphal books found in the Septuagint translation of the Jewish scriptures and which were accepted generally¹⁶ by Christians of the time, though rejected by most Jews. In this apparent ‘concession’ to his Jewish audience, Justin is ensuring that the appeals and citations he has made up to that point, as well as those he will make in the continuing argument, will be based on texts both traditions share and agree on mutually. In other words, Justin is working to ensure that he is not speaking in a language that could be misunderstood by his audience; this serves rhetorically to offer fewer points for contention with Justin’s overall argument and again to ensure that the discourse undertaken comes from a mutually spoken language. Indeed, looking comprehensively over the document, it seems that Justin’s efforts towards his various philosophical and theological proofs in the *Dialogue* come out of appeals to the Jewish scriptures,¹⁷ and with obvious good reason: his intended audience here is one which is learned in those particular texts and will present Justin with arguments based upon them.

¹⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), Ch. 71.

¹⁶ This phrasing is used rather than any discussion of Biblical canon in order to underline the position of Christianity at the time. The general variety of what we today might define as Christian sects accepted different texts as canonical or not; arguably the most significant figure in the development and declaration of an official canon was Marcion, whose canon was largely skeptical of the Old Testament as a whole, and whose legacy proved to be a catalyst for the ‘orthodox’ Church developing its own Biblical canon for both Old and New Testament scripture. For a fairly introductory, though competent treatment of this issue, see Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol 1*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 137-141 & 148-9.

¹⁷ This is not to say that Justin speaks from the Jewish Scriptures to the total exclusion of any appeals to New Testament writings. Indeed, even a cursory glance over the references Justin includes will show Justin appealing to Matthew and Luke as well as a few other New Testament texts.

This strategy is all the more evident when contrasted with apologetic works aimed at pagan audiences. While Justin, Tertullian, and Athenagoras all make appeals to Scriptural sources which would be outside the cultural sphere of their audience, we find a significant amount of discussion of material unique to a pagan Greco-Roman audience. Tertullian makes appeals to Roman history, citing Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*,¹⁸ poets like Cassius Dio,¹⁹ and references to the *Aeneid*.²⁰ Justin does likewise, making numerous references to the myths regarding the sons of Jupiter (cf. Heracles, Perseus, Mercury, Bacchus, etc.) as well as beliefs such as the apotheosis of the emperor.²¹ Finally, we find allusions to Euripides²² in Athenagoras, to say nothing of whole swaths of text cut from the *Iliad*.²³ Additionally, each apologist discusses philosophical schools prevalent in the culture of the time,²⁴ though by and large, Tertullian's treatment of these texts is much more scathing than Justin or Athenagoras.²⁵ However, the aim of all of the examples employed by the apologists is to establish Christianity in the language of the audience with respect to concepts and beliefs already held by or at least familiar to the audience.

¹⁸ Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 34

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Ch. 25

²⁰ *Ibid*, Ch. 14

²¹ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, Chs. 21, 22, 33, 54.

²² Athenagoras, *Plea For Christians*, found in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, Vol. II Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, ed. James Donaldson and Rev. Alexander Roberts. trans. Rev. Marcus Dods, Rev. B. P. Pratten, and Rev. George Reith. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874), Chs. 5 & 25

²³ Athenagoras, *Plea*, Ch 21.

²⁴ See Tertullian, *Apology*, Chs. 38, 46, 47; Justin *1 Apology* Chs. 4, 10, 20; Athenagoras *Plea* Chs. 6, 19 & 31.

²⁵ Though we will examine this complex relationship between Christianity and philosophy in more detail in the second phase of this chapter, suffice it to say for the present that Justin and Athenagoras' sympathies likely owe to the fact that their logical processes came out of Greek philosophical training prior to conversion and what one could argue as being Platonist tendencies.

As demonstrated by Justin, Tertullian, and Athenagoras, a key part of the task of the apologist is to frame and phrase the discussion in the language amenable to the audience.

Let us step back a moment in order to reinforce this point by examining a figure of central significance in both Justin's apology to a Jewish audience and his defenses to a pagan audience: Moses. We have already touched on the role Moses plays in arguments to the pagans, namely that the invocation of Moses and the prophets provides a needed sense of antiquity to the Christian project. Yet in the *Dialogue*, we see Justin giving Moses a much different treatment than what we find in the *Apologies*, stemming from the shift in the role Moses needs to occupy in the space of the argument. Gone is any rhetoric dealing with Moses as a figure of antiquity; this is due to the fact that the Jewish case against Christianity at the time did not really concern itself with the relative newness of the religion. Rather, the point of contention shifts to an argument over interpretation of the Jewish scripture claimed by both traditions. Therefore for Justin, Moses becomes a figure who gives the Law in response to what he describes as a hardness of heart among the Jews and goes on to say that the Jews are so stubborn that they do not even follow²⁶ nor understand²⁷ the Law that they have been given. Moses in this context stands as an authority whose legacy is interpreted differently by the Christian and Jewish traditions, thus forcing Justin to move the apologetic battleground to deal with these issues rather than the ones of antiquity valued by his pagan audience. One can certainly argue that the mutability of Justin's application is indeed valuable, though as it exists in the *Dialogue* it is perhaps an extreme which would lose rather than gain traction with a modern audience.

²⁶ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 19

²⁷ *Ibid*, Ch. 12

It is important to keep in mind that the aim of the whole enterprise in the apologies, at least on a socio-political level, seems to be an attempt to set up Christianity as something which is not dissimilar from the other religious practices and beliefs present in the Roman Empire. From a civil viewpoint, the apologists worked to both refute the claims of impiety, sedition, and licentiousness made against the Christian communities.²⁸ Essentially, the goal of early Christian apologetics is to make Christians seem normal and less scary to those who are perturbed by their practices and to demonstrate that they are, in fact, good members of society.

This method stands over and against another potential form of apologetics which leans much more heavily on the assertion of a singular truth via the strength and beauty of that truth; while we can certainly see this method present in the second century apologists to some extent, for example in their assertions against polytheism and for belief in God and Christ, we tend to find that such claims function as explanatory elements rather than as theological or philosophical demands; and all of this operating within an overall apologetic articulating tolerance and legitimacy in a plural society. A significant factor in establishing this tolerance and legitimacy in the second century is the normalization of Christians, and it is to an investigation of this particular task that we now turn.

Section 2.3 – The Christians and the Apologists as Citizens of the Empire

The main interest here, aside from attempting to end the persecution of the Christian faithful on what the apologists believe to be groundless charges, is to demonstrate that Christians are law abiding citizens who pose no threat to the Roman

²⁸ See Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, Ch. 26 and Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 7

imperial establishment. This is a key part of the apologetic project as one must remember that a great deal of the suspicion levied against Christians comes from the perceived belief that Christians pose a threat to the unity and stability of the empire.²⁹ Indeed, the efforts of Justin, Tertullian, and Athenagoras to make Christianity respectable puts forward the case that Christians are not only good citizens, but as ideal ones.

Athenagoras places this topic very near to the start of his *Plea*, to counter the allegations brought against the Christian community. He happily submits Christians to Roman trial, and claims that “If, indeed, anyone can convict us of a crime... [we] are prepared to undergo the sharpest and most merciless inflictions,”³⁰ but notes that one can only come to such a conclusion by the genuine examination of the life of the accused, and not by a simple *nomen ipsum* judgment. He encourages “inquiry concerning our life, our opinions, our loyalty and obedience to you and your house and government,”³¹ and seems quite confident that such an investigation will discover only loyalty and obedience to the will and laws of the emperor.

Tertullian’s efforts on this topic are neatly phrased when he asserts that “We pray for the welfare of the emperors to the eternal God,”³² and going on to chastise those persecuting Christians, saying “Carry on good officials! Torture the soul which is beseeching God on behalf of the emperor!”³³ Rhetorically, Tertullian is arguing that

²⁹ Again, see Fredriksen and Polybius in the previous chapter.

³⁰ Athenagoras, *Plea*, Ch. 2.

³¹ *Ibid*, Ch. 3

³² Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 30, NB that Tertullian devotes a full ten chapters (30-39) to the refutation of the idea that Christians are somehow opposed to the empire; though I believe the citation provided is enough evidence to support the current question, it is worth being aware that scope of his argument is far broader than what can be presented here.

³³ *Ibid*, Ch. 30

Christians are showing true civic duty by not only praying for the well-being of the emperor, but doing so to the one true God, whereas pagans pray to idols of their own devising who have no power to help or harm anyone or anything. In Tertullian's mind and in his argument, Christians are anything but insidious agents working against the stability of the empire, rather they are the unsung guarantors preserving it.

Justin's efforts to assure the pagans of Christian fidelity to the security of the empire centers on the New Testament rhetoric of Jesus saying "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar."³⁴ For Justin, there is nothing which prevents the Christian from living as a good subject of the empire or from living in obedience to the will of the emperor. Justin states that "Wherefore, only God do we worship, but in other things we joyfully obey you, acknowledging you as the kings and rulers of men, and praying that you may be found to have, besides royal power, sound judgment."³⁵ The case made here is that the Christian is obligated to obey the civil authorities in all things concerning this world, but that the emperor's power stops when it infringes on what God requires of the Christians; while this might seem a fairly open ended defense with room to justify a good deal of civil dissent on the part of the Christians, the subsequent arguments Justin puts forward in the rest of the *Apology* can be read as an outlining of what a Christian is required to do and why. From there one can see the potential argument for Justin that if it isn't dealt with in the *Apology* as belonging to a Christian obligation to God, then a Christian is *obligated* by the teachings of Christ to obey the civil authorities.

³⁴ Mark 12:17, Matt. 22:21, and Luke 20:25.

³⁵ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, Ch. 17

Finally, with respect to the direct analysis of the contents of the apologies, it merits examining the kind of tone each apologist took with his respective audience. Indeed, the tenor of the defense being articulated may well be something of value for determining the tenor modern apologists should likewise adopt. Each author seems to make an effort to address particular comments to their addressee within the broader scope of presenting their case, and the relative tone and characterization of these comments is perhaps one of the great points of discussion in the differentiation of each apologist. The scope of this examination is going to be kept as near to the introductions of the apologies as possible, examining how the audience is addressed, and what statements and assumptions were made by the apologist concerning the addressing of his audience, though certainly there is a great deal to be mined from a larger more detailed examination of the rhetorical tone of each apologist.

Both Athenagoras and Justin have similar styles in their initial address to their audience, and generally take a more congenial tone in how they entreat their respective addressees. Athenagoras begins the *Embassy* with a level of deference that borders on coming off as either servile or fulsome. His address to the co-emperors of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus acknowledges them as emperors and conquerors, but also, as Athenagoras points out particularly, as “most importantly of all, philosophers.”³⁶ It is to this point, and with this assumption in mind, that Athenagoras presents the rest of his apology, reiterating his belief that his audience will “not, like the multitude, be led astray by hearsay,”³⁷ and repeatedly throughout appealing to their sense of intellect,

³⁶ Athenagoras, *Plea*, Ch. 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

beneficence, and most of all, justice. Likewise, Justin addresses his *1 Apology* to the emperor whom he calls “a lover of learning,”³⁸ and to a Senate he characterizes as “pious and philosophers, guardians of justice and lovers of learning.” Then he counsels both the emperor and Senate to “Give good heed, and hearken to my address; and if you are indeed such, it will be manifested.”³⁹ Though Justin is perhaps a little more conditional than Athenagoras in his appeal to the just and philosophical nature of his audience, it is still readily apparent that he also believes his audience is one which can be properly reasoned with by virtue of that nature.

In contrast to the two eastern philosopher-apologists, Tertullian’s approach is certainly the more biting, aggressive, and sarcastic of the three. Whereas one might find semi-conciliatory tones in the writings of Athenagoras and Justin, there are few if any such elements to be found in Tertullian’s text; yet he is at least somewhat indirect in his attacks on the officials to whom he directs his apology, preferring to work through sarcasm or through insinuation rather than an explicit assault on his audience. His opening words are demonstrative of this. He refers to the officials he addresses as a “lofty tribunal,” but the compliment rings hollow and sarcastic when in the next sentence he implies that they “are afraid or ashamed to exercise [their] authority in making public inquiry with the carefulness which becomes justice.”⁴⁰ Further into his initial comments, he uses the suggestive pairing of ignorance and injustice no fewer than eight times to describe those who persecute and hate the Christians whom he represents; it does not

³⁸ Justin, *1 Apology*, Ch. 1.

³⁹ Justin, *1 Apology*, Ch. 2.

⁴⁰ Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 1.

seem in the least farfetched to think that just maybe Tertullian is referring to his present audience, rather than some hypothetical other officials who are similarly persecuting the Christians. Indeed, while Tertullian's tactics are quite different from those of his counterparts, the whole discussion to some extent begs the question of the best manner in which to entreat one's target audience.

Having now dealt with the specific trends present in the apologetic works, namely that each apologist in his own way seems to utilize similar tools in creating a defense of the Christian faith. The tools dealt with in this thesis have been: an appeal to Christianity's claim on antiquity, the commonality of the Christian ethnicity, contextualizing Christianity within the Greco-Roman vernacular, and the rhetorical tone used to address one's audience. Given this analysis of the content and structure of second century apologies, we then turn to the second phase of this chapter which seeks to investigate how the second century apologists attempted to deal with the philosophies and modes of thought and prevalent in their time. This section will continue to deal directly with the apologetic texts, but will also seek to include commentaries and analyses from scholars who have investigated the explicit and implicit connections between the Christian apologists and the pagan philosophical schools. Our aim here is to address and answer the extent to which the second-century apologists dialogued with, compromised with, and/or defended against the prevailing zeitgeist of the time, rather than against the specific accusations levied by their contemporaries.

Section 2.4 – Apology and Ambient Philosophy

In framing this part of the discussion, it is worth looking at the relationship between theology and philosophy from the perspective of one of the larger challenges prevalent in the field of apologetics and which provides a kind of spectrum upon which we can place the voices which we have heard. A significant challenge for an apologist, both in the second century and in the present day, is the potential charge that an apologist might be too much entwined in the spirit of the age, somehow catering to it rather than to the Gospel message, or that they are otherwise in bed with philosophical forces that are essentially corrosive to the message they are ostensibly preaching. In many ways, addressing this challenge is central to any analysis of apologetics, and it will be no different in the present thesis. Therefore I will attempt frame the following analysis so as to outline the nature of this problem as it affected the second century apologists:

Without a doubt the prevailing cultural mode of thought extant in the second century was that of the various Greek philosophical schools. Justin himself recounts the several schools he was a part of at one point in his life or another,⁴¹ Tertullian seems to have working knowledge of various philosophical currents if not outright education in these modes of thought,⁴² and Athenagoras' writings in the *Embassy* show him to be competently aware of pagan writings and conversant in their application.⁴³ Yet central to the early Church was the question of the extent to which it was permissible to have these

⁴¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 2.

⁴² Cf. Rudolf Arbesmann's introduction to Tertullian's apologetic works in Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), pg. vii-ix.

⁴³ Athenagoras, *Plea*, Chs. 6, 21 and 29 are perhaps the most indicative of this, but the above statement is largely supported by the whole content of the *Embassy* rather than simply individual citations.

‘secular’ philosophical currents running through the Church, especially as the early Christians sought to establish their belief system and structures in the face of suspicion and persecution. Each of the Fathers we have discussed previously seems to take a slightly different stance concerning the permissibility of any dialogue between the philosophical schools and the growing ecclesiastical community of early Christianity.

Anchoring one of the poles of this argument, in support of such a blending of theology and philosophy, we find the figure of Athenagoras. While it is possible that he might have been a more prolific writer than what his surviving works might suggest, and that elsewhere he might have had different theological nuances, given what we *do* have of Athenagoras’ writings, we find a figure who seems to find a great deal of support for the Christian cause in the writings of pagan philosophers and poets. Joseph Hugh Crehan, S.J. says of Athenagoras in the introduction to his translation of the *Embassy* that “Athenagoras is perhaps distinguished among the apologists in his gentlemanly tone and by his coming closer to grips with Greek religion and philosophy than was usual in a Christian.”⁴⁴ This certainly seems to be the case when we consider Athenagoras’ style and the texts he brings to bear in his arguments.

Athenagoras draws heavily on the writings of Greco-Roman classical antiquity as authoritative voices to help his case, while having comparatively few citations of what would later become the Christian Biblical canon. The *Embassy* contains fewer than ten citations to either Old or New Testament writings, citations which were largely brought

⁴⁴ Athenagoras, *Embassy for Christians, The Resurrection of the Dead in Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe. trans Joseph Hugh Crehan, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1956), 4.

in via the New Testament establishing the rigor of Christian morality,⁴⁵ and the Old Testament establishing the oneness and creative nature of God.⁴⁶ Athenagoras' use of these specific Old Testament texts seems to be in aid of underlining and giving divine clarification to the words of Greek philosophers and poets. His quotation of pagan sources is more than three times the number of scriptural citations, and his apology utilizes appeals to a whole range of figures, from the aforementioned Euripides and Homer, to figures like Pythagoras, Herodotus and most importantly Plato. Indeed, Athenagoras' philosophical leanings take heavily from the Platonic school, and his arguments in defense of Christianity seem to lean more on arguing from a Platonic image of God and the world than on Christ being a fulfillment of scriptural prophecy.

Before proceeding with this point, I do want to be clear here that my intent is not to paint Athenagoras as somehow subordinating Christianity to the various 'secular' schools of thought. Rather, my point is that he has a keen knowledge of such sources and is adamant in wedding the two together. He admits that the while Greek philosophers tried to "find out and apprehend the truth; but they have not been found competent fully to apprehend it"⁴⁷ and that it was "prophets, who, lifted in ecstasy above the natural operations of their minds by the impulses of the Divine Spirit, uttered the things with which they were inspired."⁴⁸ In these passages we see that Athenagoras would not agree that Greek philosophy is sufficient unto itself for the purpose of speaking about God, because it did not know God in the fullness of revelation, but instead worked

⁴⁵ Athenagoras, *Plea*, Ch 11, 32, & 33.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* *Plea*, Ch 9, 10 & 18.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* *Plea*, Ch. 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* *Plea*, Ch 9.

only within what the intellect of man could touch. Athenagoras seems to view the revelation of God through Christ as the unifying point by which any other thought or philosophy must be judged, but this in turn then implies that there *should* be a communication of ideas between those which arise from Christians and those which come from the ‘secular’.

As previously mentioned, Platonism is rampant throughout Athenagoras’ writings, arguably more so than his reliance on any specifically Christian texts. Crehan observes that “there can be little doubt in the mind of anyone who reads through Athenagoras that he was well versed in Platonism,”⁴⁹ and lays much of the Platonic and classical influences found in later writers such as Clement of Alexandria, at the feet of Athenagoras’ writings. His observation is not in the least wrong and it seems that the Platonic notion of divinity is one of the primary engines at the heart of Athenagoras’ apology, powering the rhetoric and arguments he uses throughout. For example, during Chapter 6 of the *Embassy*, in discussing the nature of the Christian God in contrast to pagan polytheism, he calls on Plato’s depiction of “one uncreated God, the Framer of the

⁴⁹ Athenagoras, *Embassy for Christians, The Resurrection of the Dead in Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe. trans Joseph Hugh Crehan, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1956), 7. As an aside here, Crehan betrays a form of thought which on some levels ignores that Platonism as a discrete thing would be hard to identify in Athenagoras’ time. Rather it (and its various offshoot or otherwise related schools) are the ambient culture of the time and regular tools for the kind of discussion Athenagoras is having. Therefore, identifying Athenagoras as a figure who is well versed in thinking this way might be too broad a brush to use, as such a statement is probably true of most figures of the time, and certainly of the more literary and scholarly classes. However, what I think this quote also points to is that Athenagoras seems to feel a comfort in dealing in with terms, elements, and forms that seem to arise out of what is later defined as Platonism, over and against the possibility of Athenagoras using a more scripturally-focused argument. The two are not necessarily dichotomous or mutually exclusive, but it is also worth being aware of what seems to be Athenagoras’ comfort zone.

Universe.”⁵⁰ Shortly thereafter in Chapter 9, he applies a text from Isaiah⁵¹ concerning the oneness of God seemingly more to underline the commonality between Christian belief and that of Platonic philosophy over some attempt to let Isaiah stand on its own merits. While I, again, would not say he’s subordinating Christian texts to ‘secular’ ones, he is certainly leaning the two upon each other so that one helps support the other. He continues his use of Platonic thought throughout much of the apology, perhaps most notably in his dismantling of pagan polytheism in pursuit of Christian monotheism. His primary argument here draws on Plato’s sense of the divine as uncreated and immutable,⁵² but that the various polytheistic gods are either created by the poets,⁵³ or else were men who were later declared gods.⁵⁴ Athenagoras’ logic here, indebted to Platonism, is that if the gods have any point of creation, no matter how far back it may reach, then they cannot be divine, for that which is divine has no creation point.

One might perhaps have room to question if Athenagoras employed philosophy to the extent that he did because he was attempting to reach his audience, e.g. the philosopher emperor Marcus Aurelius, on terms that might be both appealing and appeasing. Perhaps his zealous use of pagan examples over those of a suspect new religious movement was simply a tactic he felt he *had* to resort to in order to make his case to the emperor and to any other educated persons who might happen to read it. Anders-Christian Jacobsen observes that part of Athenagoras’ apologetic strategy were

⁵⁰ Athenagoras, *Plea*, Ch. 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, Ch. 9.

⁵² *Ibid*, Ch. 19.

⁵³ *Ibid*, Ch. 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Ch. 28.

“attempts to create strategic alliances with various involved parties,”⁵⁵ and notes that by bringing in Platonism he might have had hopes to sway figures like the emperor. It is impossible to know for sure whether Athenagoras himself was pleased with such a blending of philosophy and theology, however, the evidence we have does seem to suggest an amiability towards such a coming-together, if not an outright eagerness to demonstrate agreeability between the two. Whatever Athenagoras might have thought or felt personally though, what is quite certain is that his works *do* bring the two together in such a way as to make the connection between them seem, if not inevitable, then at least quite natural and logical.

Standing opposite Athenagoras on the other end of the spectrum, and advocating a much more distinct separation between anything of pagan philosophical origin and that of Christianity is Tertullian. William Placher points out that not all of the Church was content with the alliance between Christianity and the Greek thought, and names Tertullian as “the most eloquent spokesman”⁵⁶ of the protest against such a path. Rather, we find in Tertullian not only a voice in favour of a kind of cloistering defense of Christian principles but also one who is an advocate in defense of some of the then-contemporary controversies over elements of Church tradition. Eric Osborn describes in Tertullian someone who held “that it is only within a tradition that originality is

⁵⁵ Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “Athenagoras” in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 87.

⁵⁶ William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 64.

possible,”⁵⁷ contrasting Marcion as a deviant for rejecting apostolic tradition, while upholding Jesus as original for working within the context of the Mosaic law and transforming it. One could potentially argue from such a standpoint that in Tertullian’s mind the addition of outside philosophical elements then, does not represent originality of some kind, but rather a deviancy from the tradition which has come from Christ.

Tertullian was inherently suspicious of anything which attempted to relate the radicalism of the Gospel and the purity of its message to anything outside of that which has Christian foundations alone. His classic idiom of “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”⁵⁸ could hardly be a more direct and Tertullian-esque choice of words to describe his sentiments. Even in the apology treated in this thesis, we find evidence that Tertullian does not look highly or favorably on the philosophical schools of his day, saying “the speculations of philosophers have perverted the older Scriptures. Some of their brood, with their opinions, even adulterated our new-given Christian revelation, and corrupted it into a system of philosophic doctrines.”⁵⁹ Tertullian’s use of terms such as ‘corruption’ and ‘adulteration’ seem quite a far cry from any unabashedly positive use of philosophy and philosophical terms.

Certainly not one for mincing his words, we find in Tertullian little shortage of ire for those who would seek to introduce philosophical thinking into the Christian faith. Yet at the same time, as we have seen previously, Tertullian does not seem to flinch in

⁵⁷ Eric Osborn, “The Subtlety of Tertullian,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, no. 4 (Nov, 1998), 366, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1584830>

⁵⁸ Placher, 64, cf. also Tertullian, *Prescription against Heretics* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol 3, translated by S. Thelwell, Ch. 7.

⁵⁹ Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 47.

wielding Christianity as a *perceived* philosophy if it will help his apology to identify inconsistencies in the Roman persecution of the faith. The likes of Plato and his ilk are brought up more often than not to demonstrate Roman equivocation with respect to their treatment of the truth of the Christian religion and the philosophers who profess similar, though much more imperfect ideas.⁶⁰ In some cases as well, the language Tertullian uses is decidedly more patronizing than what one might expect as well, contrasting Christian “affirmation” or “profession” with the Greeks’ “admitting” or “acknowledging”; tonally Tertullian likes to make the philosophers and poets sound almost begrudging as regards the points where Christians and the ‘secular’ agree.

Given this characterization of philosophers and their ‘opinions’, it is perhaps wholly unsurprising that that Tertullian draws the greatest proofs of his argument from the Christian lifestyle. While he makes some use of the Scriptures at points, and Osborn observes that “Tertullian's defence of Old Testament laws and history is excessive and unreasonable... [Because] Tertullian will not abandon the good creator and defends every part of the creator's story,”⁶¹ Tertullian’s apologetic bread and butter to his pagan counterparts seems to rest within identifying the superior morality of the Christian lifestyle⁶² as something that does not line up with the charges leveled against them by their pagan persecutors.⁶³ The Christian must ultimately answer to Christ for their

⁶⁰ See Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 38 and 47 as examples of this.

⁶¹ Osborn, 363-4; this method of argument is more in light with Tertullian’s works against Marcion and his demiurge, but it is worth pointing out here as demonstrative of Tertullian’s regard for the entirety of what would become the Biblical canon.

⁶² See Tertullian, *Apology*, Ch. 45.

⁶³ It is curious to note here that, while Tertullian is facing a pagan audience, he like Athenagoras, refrains from citing the Christian scriptures. However, his use of ‘secular’ supplementary texts obviously carries a much different tone than Athenagoras’ application of the same.

lifestyle, and not to the ephemeral and mercurial standards of the time. Given this, it seems only natural to indeed ask what Athens could possibly add to Jerusalem. Osborn, in reflecting on this dichotomy, summarizes Tertullian saying that “The divine economy moves in one direction. It is as foolish to try to improve the gospel with philosophy as it was for the Galatians to improve it with the Mosaic Law.”⁶⁴

However, modern scholarship on Tertullian has identified him as within his own philosophical arc, with Osborn noting that “As a Stoic, he prized Heraclitus as much as did the Platonist Clement of Alexandria,”⁶⁵ and Pap Levente contextualizing Tertullian’s discussion of patience, while obviously not treated in this thesis, as having “based his reasoning on Stoic ideas which he used to conceptualize the Christian virtue, so he was in favor of the pagan philosophical thinking instead of the Christian one.”⁶⁶ If, indeed, these two scholars are correct in their genealogy of Tertullian’s underlying philosophy, then it appears that even one who is as avid in his defense of the faith from outside elements as Tertullian seemed to be, is still not immune from contracting and then employing such elements from the ambient culture that surrounds them. Simply by living in the milieu of such ideas, even an avid opponent of the same seems fertile ground for ideological self-replication via whatever that individual might produce.

Synthesizing, or perhaps even generalizing the works and overall attitude of Tertullian, Placher describes Tertullian’s case as “a powerful warning against all those who want to modify Christian faith because it fails to fit somebody’s theory of what a

⁶⁴ Osborn, 366.

⁶⁵ Osborn, 361.

⁶⁶ Pap Levente, “Stoic Virtues in Tertullian’s Works and Their Relation to Cicero,” *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica* 6, no. 1 (Dec, 2014), 14. Doi: 10.1515/ausp-2015-0001.

reasonable or up-to-date religion ought to be,”⁶⁷ though as we have seen, Tertullian might not have been as efficacious as he’d have hoped to this end. In providing such a description, Placher perhaps goes slightly too far in making Tertullian a poster-child for unyielding devotion to a particular permutation of religion, but at the same time, one could hardly disagree that Tertullian is vehement in his opposition to the potential changes that outside philosophies could bring. Furthermore, it seems to correctly define Tertullian as one for whom (at least overt) compromise with the outside is distasteful to say the least; Tertullian’s Christian message is not something which should seek to make itself more palatable, but instead requires a defense of itself as the *only* path to be followed, regardless of whatever clamours might result externally as a result.

With Athenagoras on one hand and Tertullian on the other, we find, seemingly bizarrely, our final apologist, Justin Martyr, caught somewhere between them. On the one hand, one would certainly be hard pressed to make any claim that Justin is somehow against the dialogue between philosophy and Christianity. Yet on the other hand, there is some subtlety in Justin’s apologies that demonstrate a keenness to prioritize Christian texts and beliefs in a way that someone like Athenagoras does not appear to demonstrate. In analysis of Justin on this point, the goal here is to demonstrate how Justin, while certainly empathetic towards the potential connections between Christianity and ‘secular’ philosophies, nuances and in some ways couches his statements, pushing him more towards the center of the debate than one might suspect at first glance.

⁶⁷ Placher, 65.

As mentioned above, it is not necessarily hard to demonstrate that Justin is keen to bring philosophy into dialogue with Christian revelation. Again, simply reading Justin and taking him at his word, would seem to place him squarely in league with the likes of Athenagoras. Indeed, in some cases we find Justin going beyond merely advocating for the blending of Christian beliefs with Greek philosophies, and actually drawing specific connections between the Platonic creation of the world and the Stoic conflagration at the end times⁶⁸ and their relevant counterparts in the Christian tradition. And if one widens the analysis to his general treatment of philosophers and philosophy in general, his expressions do seem to carry a markedly positive nature, considering philosophical pursuits as consistent with acting in alignment with reason⁶⁹ while at the same time acknowledging that pagan philosophers did not quite fully understand the realities they were grasping at because they did not as yet have the full revelation of God through Christ.⁷⁰ Finally, on a personal level, Justin identifies himself without compunction as a philosopher in the opening chapter of the *Dialogue*⁷¹ and in discussing his conversion, identifies Christianity as “the only sure and useful philosophy.”⁷² In this understanding of Justin we might feel quite confident in categorizing Justin as one for whom the Hellenization of Christianity did not pose enough of a threat to prompt worry or concern that the initial and core teachings would be somehow lost; such a position is something which would surely make the likes of Tertullian either blanch or fly into a diatribe of

⁶⁸ Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, Ch. 20.

⁶⁹ Ibid. *1 Apology*, Ch. 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid. *1 Apology* Ch. 44.

⁷¹ Ibid. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 1.

⁷² Ibid. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 8.

some description. A fundamental point of Justin's theology and apology though, whatever Tertullian might think of it, seems to be that pagan philosophies are inspired by the same Logos which is fully realized in Christ, and therefore that such philosophies are precursors and ultimately cooperative with the Christian doctrine and Gospel.

However, conceptualizing the philosophies of his day as somehow preparatory for Christianity carries with it an important realization. C.J. de Vogel observes this key realization in Justin's works, that "both Plato and Christ in their teachings were concerned with the same things: with God and making men find the way to Him."⁷³ Yet de Vogel also is quick to note that Justin also does not see Platonism and Christian teaching as somehow equivalent or on equal authoritative and metaphysical footing:

The relation between philosophy and Christianity in Justin's view is not such that Christian faith just adds some complementary 'teachings' to the true but partial insights of philosophy; there are also certain 'pagan errors', and Christianity with relation to philosophy is not only supplementary but corrective... True, [pagan] intellect partakes of the Logos, and therefore may attain to a certain amount of true insight. But Christians have more than that: they have the disposal of sources which, as a special revelation of God, were known and open to them only.⁷⁴

De Vogel recognizes in Justin's writings a primacy of Christian doctrine which seems to be much more vocal and pervasive than that of Athenagoras, and as such places distance between the two apologists via the emphases present in their respective works.

Further distancing Justin from Athenagoras' apologetic style and the theological implications therein is their relative use (or not) of 'secular' and Christian texts to support their positions. Again, Athenagoras seems to prioritize the use of 'secular' texts over

⁷³ C. J. de Vogel, "Problems Concerning Justin Martyr: Did Just Find a Certain Continuity between Greek Philosophy and Christian Faith?" *Mnemosyne* 31, no. 4 (1978), 362. De Vogel in saying leans on a passage from Justin's 2 *Apology*, and a specific interpretation of Justin's Greek to reach this conclusion.

⁷⁴ De Vogel, 363.

scriptural ones by a ratio of nearly three-to-one. Again, this is not to call into question whether Athenagoras is more a philosopher than a Christian, but merely to demonstrate in his apology that he feels it necessary to draw on ‘secular’ texts and allusions and construct arguments based upon their content and rhetoric, rather than embracing a more scripturally based approach. However, as de Vogel observes of Justin, and as a glance over the footnotes or citations in any translation of his works would corroborate, Justin's “Christianity is based on the Scriptures... Platonism was by no means a preparation for the Gospel in the same sense and with the same force as the Old Testament was.”⁷⁵ Even in his apologies to pagan audiences (that is to say, not in the *Dialogue*, where a reliance on Old Testament citation might well be expected) Justin frames his arguments from the implications of a fulfillment of the Old Testament, rather than leaning on arguing from ‘secular’ notions of what God or religion should look like.

While it would be false to say that Justin makes no allusions or citations of Platonic texts (one need not look further than the second chapter of *1 Apology* before finding a reference to Plato's *Republic*), the structure and progression of Justin's argument draws much more heavily on Old Testament texts and prophets as the authoritative sources than on anything written by Greek poets and philosophers. In other words, unlike Athenagoras' style, which focuses on demonstrating how Christianity is able to deal in concert with ideas extant in Platonism, Justin's tactics center more on an assumed and demonstrated authority of the Scriptural texts, and how Christ and the

⁷⁵ De Vogel, 369.

Christians are the fulfillment and inheritors of that. In this way, he is forced somewhat away from his Greek compatriot and edged towards a more central point in the debate.

While Justin's approach to apologetics differentiates him from Athenagoras, one should acknowledge that, like Athenagoras, his aim is very much the same: forging an alliance with the 'secular' parties of his day, both academic and governmental. William Placher identifies this 'alliance with philosophy' as remarkable and intellectually daring, but also as a compromise with the prevailing culture. While Placher seems to use 'compromise' as a non-pejorative term, its use also seems to indicate a belief that runs contrary to the notion that Christianity is a kind of perfection or fulfillment of already existing ideas that needed a fully revealed and cohesive framework to properly work; a suggestion, as we have seen, which may not be as readily applicable to the likes of Justin as Placher suggests. Placher points out that pagan philosophical themes, specifically those in Platonic and Stoic thought "attracted many Christians", but also observes that the discrepancies between Christian doctrine and pagan philosophy "could lead to some changes in what Christians believed;"⁷⁶ it is with this statement in mind that Placher goes on to discuss the likes of Tertullian and those who might protect against such changes.

Treating Justin specifically concerning his infusion of philosophy into Christianity, Placher states that "Justin has faced attacks from both sides. Philosophers say he oversimplified Platonism; Christians have accused him of modifying faith to suit philosophy. Both charges contain an element of truth, but Justin did try to think about

⁷⁶ Placher, 59.

Christianity in terms of the best ideas of his time.”⁷⁷ Placher’s analysis of Justin here is a point worth developing and seems to, as is our present goal, situate Justin in a kind of middle ground, not basing his arguments on the philosophic elements of his pre-conversion education, but also seeing fit to introduce those elements into Christianity when he saw benefit in doing so. Placher suggests rather strongly that in Justin’s contemplation of Christianity through the lens of his contemporary philosophies, Justin was able to understand and present Christianity in a new light, one which was able to illuminate Christianity’s truth and significance not only for those already following the Christian message, but also for those who might not otherwise have come to know it.

The marked distinction between Tertullian’s jeremiad against the blending of Christian doctrine and pagan philosophy, and Athenagoras’ contentedness with and even excitement at such a marriage is certainly worth noting, to say nothing of Justin finding himself somewhere in between these two poles. Identifying this distinction present in the voices of second century apologists translates to understanding a significant and longstanding trend within the body of the Church. There is no doubt that some of the difficulties inherent in the dialogue between the Christian and the ‘secular’ have the potential to exacerbate the challenge posed at the beginning of this section and the scenario that worried Tertullian in *Prescription Against Heretics*: that through the

⁷⁷ Placher, 60. As a further note, ‘changes’ of this nature will be examined more thoroughly in the third chapter, building on Placher’s characterization here via an analysis of Adolf von Harnack’s suspicions of the Hellenizing undertaken by the apologists. Suffice it to say at this juncture that Placher raises a point worthy of consideration, and in questioning the extent to which external elements could change what Christians believe, he exposes one of the great challenges of apologetics. However, his characterization of this interplay seems to forget elements within the tradition and within the Gospels and scriptural canon itself where faithfulness to God was not damaged (and in some cases was enhanced!) by use of analogues relevant to the ambient society which may or may not exist externally to the message inherent in the Church’s canon.

dialogue process, elements that are corrosive to Christianity are able to find their way in or that Christians might find themselves tethered to such elements rather than to the Gospel. It is not an inconsiderable concern, and Tertullian is right to worry about it.

Yet, the opposite venture, of somehow making sure that no such elements come anywhere close to the Christian message seems, at best impossible, and at worst counter-productive towards the end of both evangelization and apologetics. As Jörg Ulrich observed of the apologetic project:

If the task of theology is to express Christianity in the contemporary forms of thought for any given social context, which the theologian also unavoidably belongs to, one should recognize that the theological endeavors of early Christian apologists were not only necessary, but also theologically legitimate, meaningful, and genuinely Christian, and hence avoid... accusations of heresy⁷⁸

Ulrich's point here is an astute one, recognizing a common thread running throughout all of the apologies. Inherent in each of their works is an implicit recognition that the philosophy of the day must be dealt with in some manner. Likewise, as this chapter has shown, each apologist does this in his own way. However, to a greater or lesser extent across the board, each apologist also finds himself 'unavoidably belonging' to the philosophical system of his time and is in some ways forced to use 'secular' philosophic language to describe Christian principles. Addressing the 'secular' on its own terms seems to be an inescapable premise in some ways.

It is worth keeping in mind that the struggle today between establishing MacIntyre-Benedictine Church which stands observationally in the world and against

⁷⁸ Jörg Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century," in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 26.

adoption of prevailing philosophical currents versus a Pecknold-Dominican one which seems to desire an active engagement, adoption, and ‘Christianization’ of such philosophies, is a struggle which seems to have been with the Church nearly from its inception. Admittedly there is a great deal separating the modern philosophical climate from that of the second century, as well as separating our earliest apologist (Justin) from the latest (Tertullian). Indeed, as Eric Osborn remarked of the distinctions within the field of apologetics: “Apologetic takes its targets separately so that argument against one target may not fit easily with argument against another. This is still evident in modern times where writers may exhibit great diversity in responding to objections within one culture, let alone venturing outside that culture”⁷⁹ Osborn’s words identify the way in which such figures, despite or perhaps because of their circumstances, navigate the challenge of relating their contemporary philosophy to theology and its contemporary needs.

While the philosophic atmosphere of the second century had elements which proved to be helpful to the definition and propagation of the Christian Gospel (think here of Athenagoras’ use of Plato), the nature of the apologetic project also demonstrates that there were significant issues it presented as well; such a project would not have taken the forms it did if there was perfect agreement between the beliefs of the ‘secular’ and those of the Christian. Undeniably it is anachronistic to apply MacIntyre or Pecknold labels to a discussion of second century figures; however, it can prove somewhat helpful as well, as it recognizes as active at the core of this long conversation similar trends and issues, present both now and in the Church of the second century. This connection has the

⁷⁹ Osborn, 361.

potential to allow the works and methods of the second century apologists to reach forward to the present day and provide us with tools and strategies for the continual defense and promotion of the Christian Gospel message.

Chapter Three: Lessons from the Second Century

As we begin the third and final chapter of this thesis, it is at first helpful to summarize the major points established in the previous two chapters. By understanding the preceding points relevant to the following discussion, my hope is that the conclusions to be drawn will be both cognitively and organizationally easier to grasp with this information readily accessible. Therefore, in order to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the key points articulated thus far, it seems prudent to have a brief summation at the head of the chapter before introducing the themes and ideas to be explored more fully in the chapter at hand

The contextualization process carried out in chapter one first served to set up the necessary cultural understandings for the apologetic discourses in chapter two, but also to establish areas of similarity and difference between the second century and the modern age which would allow for our analysis to translate certain aspects of the second century apologetic discourse into the present day. To this end it was established that the ancient and modern contexts shared the similarities of (1) a culture of religious pluralism, (2) philosophical complications and contentions with the age in which they existed, thus creating a culture of suspicion around the Church, (3) a generally established national or civic religion (cult) which preached a gospel whose demands run into conflict with the demands of the Christian Gospel, and (4) a developing need for individuals and ecclesiastical institutions to articulate the Christian position in ways accessible to the uninitiated. While this list is not exhaustive of the subject in general, nor of all the similarities between the two epochs which will be explored in this chapter, it nonetheless

represents the four core contextual correspondences which, up to this point in the thesis have been highlighted and discussed.

Conversely the contextualization process of the first chapter also demonstrated that there were distinct and key differences between the modern age and the second century. The first chapter advocated that there was a substantial difference between the ways in which each respective time (1) provided the means and/or incentive for religious pluralism to encourage or discourage a client/firm relationship in a general religious marketplace, (2) provided or failed to provide an authoritative monarchical/oligarchical audience to which the apologist(s) could appeal, (3) the shifting attitudes towards antiquity vs. novelty, with the ancients valuing antiquity and moderns valuing novelty, and finally (4) the establishment of a distinctly religious/secular sphere of life via the rational agent and a dichotomy of private vs public space. These differences in some ways complicate the process by which the present thesis seeks to translate the wisdom of the second century apologists to the modern day, but at the same time, the restrictions these difficulties pose in some ways more sharply clarify the course(s) that must be charted in order to strengthen the apologetic effort of the modern Church. And ultimately it is with each of these differences and their various implications that this third and final chapter will have to first contend in order to define the terrain for its subsequent arguments and conclusions.

Additionally at this pre-introductory stage, I also want to provide a brief synopsis of the second century apologetic tactics and tools discussed previously in chapter two. While each apologist tailored his use of each rhetorical stratagem to the context and audience he was addressing, a fact worth remembering in its own right, there were

certainly common threads running throughout the various apologetic arguments which the previous chapter identified. Special attention was placed on (1) demonstrating Christianity as possessing and participating in a tradition of ancient heritage, (2) establishing Christianity as a kind of ethnic group unto itself, (3) utilization and contextualization of Christianity within the greater sphere of Greco-Roman culture, (4) the adoption of specific tones of voice and speech when addressing one's audience, and finally (5) the interplay between the adoption and/or rejection of Greco-Roman philosophical currents into what would later become Christian philosophy, theology, and doctrine. Each of these major points articulated in chapter two will serve as primary areas of interest as we seek to bring these figures forward to apologize in a modern context.

Having so revisited these previously defined topics and their applicability in their own time and context, it serves us now to turn to a proper introduction of the themes and areas to be covered and discussed in the final chapters of this thesis. The final aim of this chapter is to define the extent to which the early apologists can speak to the present context and outline what apologetic path their wisdom suggests the modern Church should follow. The work of the previous two chapters will be continually referred to and built on in the course of this process, and many of the scholars and sources who were brought to bear in the earlier sections of this thesis will again be revisited and re-interrogated in the interests of providing a conclusive synthesis to the question posed by this thesis. The process and end result of this final chapter will be to state what the apologetic project of the present day might look like if we allow it to be informed by the methods and tools utilized by the first Christian apologists, and as such we must keep in mind that in the midst of the broader field of apologetics, the conclusions, directions and

suggestions drawn by this thesis are done in the light of the works of Justin, Tertullian and Athenagoras. This task of understanding and the analyses inherent within it will be broken down into four major sections within this chapter, and will function as follows.

The first section will attempt to treat with the problematic nature of defining and claiming legitimacy as a religious institution in the modern world. This section will address questions concerning the nature of the modern public sphere and what ultimately qualifies one to be a voice within it; this question is especially important concerning institutional structures, particularly religious ones, which have become something of suspect entities in the modern world. This section will also question the extent to which the modes of rhetoric of the second century apologist can speak to a system where legitimacy is defined in a markedly different way from antiquity. This questioning will be put into conversation with scholars like Gary Wills who offers a fairly generalizable definition of the shape and scope of the modernist critique of the present day Church, and Tim Muldoon who provides suggestions for the way in which the Church can establish and bolster its claim to legitimacy in the world.

The second section will investigate the extent to which the methods for apology used by the Church risk carrying forward the very thing(s) the Church is trying to defend itself against. Working in tandem with the discussion in the second half of the second chapter, this section investigates what the balance point should be between the integration and rejection of modes of thought and being which come from outside the Church. A considerable amount of focus will be placed upon understanding how the Church of the second century operated within the public sphere and how the present day Church likewise strives to do so. We will cross-reference the subalternity of the early Church

with the present day Church to understand the challenges present in attempting to legitimize religious entities which are inherently suspect, and begs the question of the efficacy and the risks inherent in speaking via a modern language.

The third section of this chapter will analyze this question via the criticisms of blending with the prevailing culture articulated by Adolf von Harnack vis-à-vis the early apologists and Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of modern Kantian ethics. The concerns levied by these two figures are certainly worthy of consideration and seem figures with which the current thesis must grapple on some level, simply because they serve as ballast against overzealous and uncritical integration of modernity with the Church. We may see in this section some shades of the questions raised by Vaage in the previous chapter, and ask whether speaking in such a voice out of rebellion inherently carries forward the elements it is rebelling against. This section concludes by placing the thesis on ground wherein we can begin to definitively identify an apologetic plan informed by the writings and challenges overcome by the second century apologists.

The final section seeks to, in the light of the previous three sections, as well as in the light of the entire thesis up to that point, fully synthesize and understand the extent to which the methods, rhetoric, skill and wisdom of Justin, Tertullian and Athenagoras can be brought to bear on the modern context. The work of Muldoon and Wills will be reprised in this section to some extent, and the notions of theological illiteracy in the modern age and the postcolonial notion of hybridity will also feature prominently in this section as unique ways in which the second century can continue to advise the present. The section will conclude with a general outline for modern apologetics as dictated by the second century advice which can be brought forward.

Section 3.1 – The Problematic Nature of Legitimization Concerning the Modern Age and Second Century Apologetic Rhetoric

In dialoguing between the modern needs of the Church and the arguments and rhetoric of the second century, it is first necessary to articulate the intellectual terrain over which such discussions must move. In defining this terrain it is perhaps most beneficial to define how and where the rhetoric and tools of the early apologists seem to emphatically clash with or otherwise fail to meet the needs of a modern society and Church. This section in some ways provides certain parameters within which we may be able to apply the tools of the early apologists; this is accomplished by a necessary discarding of certain approaches because their difference from the modern age would likely be too steep a cost for a modern individual to countenance. It should be noted here as well that this section will largely avoid any discussion of similarities between the respective time periods in the interest of broaching such topics later in the chapter as the direction for apologetic discourse takes a more complete shape.

Perhaps one of the most prime examples wherein the rhetoric of the second century apologists would put it at odds with modern sensibilities is in the attempts of the second century apologists to, in some cases, have their cake and eat it too. By this I mean that we find, with respect to the apologists describing Christianity's relationship with the Jews as well as with pagan philosophers, an attempt to identify with these groups and lay claim to the traditions they represent, while at the same time claiming to be something distinct from them. The apologists cited the voices of key figures significant to the Greco-Roman culture, or from the Jewish tradition, though in such a way as to praise these figures in one instance as forerunner elements to the supreme truth of Christianity,

only to cut them down shortly thereafter for whatever crimes, contradictions, or indecencies occurred in their lives and teachings.

The rhetoric Justin uses against Trypho for example,¹ is something which would certainly be considered anti-Semitic by any modern standards. Justin's tone and oratory seems keen to distance Christianity from the Jews, and demonstrate that Christianity has little to do with Judaism aside from converting erroneous Jews to the true faith in Jesus Christ. Yet at the same time, Justin's argument to the pagan leadership, as we saw in the last chapter, seems to hinge on placing Christianity within the heritage which belongs to Judaism. While some would say Justin's arguments accomplish this feat of intellectual and theological finesse, one also has to admit that such rhetoric could seem to smack of equivocation or pandering if it was utilized in a more or less verbatim sense today.

As additional support to this we might turn to a figure who voices such a critique of equivocation. While admittedly the Greek philosopher Celsus is outside the key figures under investigation by this thesis, he is nevertheless a relative contemporary of the early apologists and his work *On the True Doctrine* provides a contemporary pagan retort to the apologetic arguments. While his actual text is no longer extant, R. Joseph Hoffman's work in amalgamating and translating what we do have of Celsus via figures like Origen yields this criticism of the Christian rhetoric of his day.

You hypocrites... When you Christians find things made difficult for you by the Jews, you come around and say that you worship the same God as they do! What is to be believed? For when your master, Jesus, lays down laws contrary to those laid

¹ There are numerous instances one might cite here depicting Jews and their religion/practices as, to name a few, Injurious to God (*Dialogue*, Ch. 23), deluded, (*Dialogue*, Ch. 44) and ultimately abandoned by God in favor of Christians (*Dialogue*, Ch. 82).

down by Moses, in whom the Jews put their faith, you immediately undertake to find another God.²

It is worth pointing out that in the context surrounding this passage Celsus is, to some extent, mixing up the beliefs of Christian groups like the Marcionites with that of what would eventually become orthodox Christianity. However, even with an understanding of Celsus' confusing one Christian group with another, it is also clear that from an outside perspective there is some amount of perceived hypocrisy and equivocation going on in the Christian community.

As a kind of modern example and point of comparison to this argument, I would like to examine Gary Wills' work which provides an analysis of a distinctly American Catholicism in his text *Why I am a Catholic*, which outlines, defines, and in some cases defends the peculiarities of modern U.S. Catholicism. In many ways problems such as those perceived by Celsus exist as much now as they did in the second century. The apologists' use of and appeals to certain bodies of authority when it suits them and their disavowal when it does not, seems a tactic that modern individuals would have little patience for. Wills makes a similar observation with respect to the then-Cardinal Ratzinger's stance on the place of bishops' conferences within the Church's magisterial and decision making processes. Wills cites a 1965 essay in *Concilium* written by Ratzinger calling such conferences "the best means of concrete plurality and unity."³ However immediately following this quote, Wills goes on to cite a 1985 interview with

² Celsus, *On True Doctrine: A Discourse Against Christians*, trans. R. Joseph Hoffman, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 96.

³ Gary Wills, *Why I am a Catholic*, (Boston: Mariner Books, 2002), 257. Cf. also Joseph Ratzinger, "The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality," in *Concilium*, 1965, p. 30.

Ratzinger where the cardinal stated “We must not forget that the episcopal conferences have no theological basis, they do not belong to the structure of the Church as willed by Christ.”⁴ Wills seems to feel himself left to ask in a seemingly Celsusian manner ‘What is to be believed?’

The conclusion drawn by Wills at this point is that Ratzinger was perfectly fine with some amount of equivocation on a given point depending on which stance would best support his position. Given this admittedly singular example, it would serve us at this point to interject that whether Wills’ conclusion is right or not, it is a likely conclusion I suspect many modern Westerners might come to after looking over the same information and quotations. It is also worth pointing out as well, that Wills’ concern with such intellectual and theological gymnastics is coming from within the tradition, rather than from outside as we saw with Celsus. Though even from such a position, for the purpose of the present discussion, it does not matter if such a conclusion is right or wrong, only that it is *perceived*, and therefore provides an impediment to furthering the dialogue between the Church and the world. Such perceived equivocation is likely to be harmful to the overall perception of Church legitimacy and authority by both members of the Church body and from outsiders. Part of the question that must then be asked is how this ‘popular legitimacy’ affects the Church’s voice through such perceptions.

Before addressing this particular difference however, that is, before addressing the ways in which the notion of popular legitimacy necessarily affects the apologetic mission, we must first understand the social divorce which creates such a situation. The

⁴ Wills, 258. Cf. also Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (Ignatius Press, 1985), p. 113.

separation, officially or unofficially, of the state from religious authority as well as the converse separation of religion from state influence, is a fundamentally important difference between the culture of the ancient world and that of today. In many ways, as we will see in the subsequent discussions in this section, this separation serves as the grounding which allows for many of the other complications concerning a bringing forward of the second century apologists into the modern age.

Let us first attempt to understand the shape and extent to which this divorce has taken place. To varying extents throughout the Western world, there is still some measure of civic religion and various days of worship for it (e.g. the Fourth of July, Canada Day, Bank Holidays, Memorial/Remembrance Day, etc.). Additionally, as our discussion of Charles Taylor in chapter one demonstrated, this divorcing process between the secular and religious is thanks in large part to a (re)conceptualization of what belongs in the private vs. public spheres, with religious belief, as commonly conceptualized, being assigned to a private role. This is a marked contrast from the second century culture where religion generally permeated the entirety of life. In short, the development of a secular entity *at all* is a striking departure from the world of Justin, Tertullian, or Athenagoras. It's important to note that the works of these apologists did not really have to argue for religion being a voice of influence in society and a public factor in the way the empire was run; indeed, such a situation was already the case in their time.

An inherent difficulty between the second century and the present lies in the dichotomy between the ancient world's inherently public religion and the modern era's insistence on its privatization. While it is possible to argue that vestiges of religious expression via inherently public media such as festivals, public holidays, and temple

worship practices continue to exist in worship rituals such as those mentioned at the beginning of the previous paragraph (cf. Hobsbawm), it is ultimately the case that colloquially ‘religious’ celebrations are private affairs, even if done in communities of faith. As such, it is worth being aware of the fact that the religious climate the apologists had to contend with was one with markedly different fundamental assumptions to our own. The Enlightenment values explored in chapter one dictate that each individual rational agent is given the purview to choose a religious outlook for him/herself, and it is the diffusion of religious responsibility in this pluralist manner that seems in part to fuel the contentions individuals may have with the Church or religion as a whole. Any apologetic attempt in the modern era must acknowledge this situation, and to some extent deal with it on its own terms; unfortunately it is a situation whose differences from the second century make it difficult for the early apologists to speak directly to.

This discussion then brings us into our next major area of difference between the ancient and modern contexts, which likewise seems to stem from the creation of and split between a distinctly religious sphere and a distinctly secular one. In identifying areas of contrast with the modern age we must take into account how the apologetic discourse is sculpted and changed when legitimacy is found in many respects either via some form of popular assent, or through an interplay between the idea in question and that of the rational agent; this method is set over and against authority derived, as it largely was in the ancient context, through a singular person or a select body of people. This question and distinction is a somewhat broad one, so it serves us to attempt to break it down into sections which are more manageable thematically. We will first look at in terms of its

make up, then assess what the situation therefore calls for from a modern apologist attempting to navigate this aspect of the religious-cultural landscape.

In examining the composite make-up of the foundations of this problem, it is worth remembering, as mentioned in chapter two, that the apologetic arguments of the second century seem to have been mostly targeted at entities with monolithic forms of power, such as the Roman Senate and the emperor; likewise it is worth being aware of the relative lack of figures like these in the present day. There does not seem to be one person or body which exists presently or as part of a longer tradition to which one might direct ones appeals for such a purpose. Institutions like these seem to have been dismantled to some extent. It is of such a situation that Muldoon observes: “the difficulty is this: the postmodern world is one in which all communities begin, in some sense, on a level playing field.”⁵ As a result of this, even if such a body were present, institutional forms of authority seem weak at best in convincing modern people that a given idea or way of being is Truthful. The difficulty in targeting one single source of authority with an apologetic message in the hopes of creating some kind of Christianized change in the fabric of society is one which has become something of a pipe dream as a result of this breakdown of authoritative institutional sources for Truth. Muldoon likewise observes this, saying that “In this world, individual conscience becomes the locus of authority.”⁶

This shift in the locus of authority obviously necessitates a change of address for the apologetic mission. One could certainly argue that a would-be apologist could attempt

⁵ Tim Muldoon, *Seeds of Hope: Young Adults and the Catholic Church in the United States*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 52.

⁶ Muldoon, 52.

to address a body like the U.S. Congress, the U.N. or any given head of state in an effort to mimic the efforts of the earlier apologists. However, such institutions are no longer capable socially, or in some cases even legally, able to affect the kind of change or way of life the would-be apologist might hope for. If the locus of authority has shifted to the extent that Muldoon suggests it does (and one could also appeal to the chapter one discussion of Taylor and Shah for further suggestions of this) then the apologetic efforts of the second century find another stumbling block in their ability to treat with the problems of the modern age in a meaningful way.

Without the kind of figures that serve as authoritative addressees who have genuine power to affect the kind social change requested by the apologists, the apologetic project must target its appeals differently than it has in the past. While perhaps certain positions or venues do allow for the convincing of or defense to greater numbers of people, the modern West is by and large in a society where each individual person is considered as his/her own rational agent, and one must work apologetically to such a situation. Furthermore, decisions in such a society are made either via the court of public opinion, by convincing (rationally or otherwise) a sufficient number of individuals, or otherwise demonstrating the validity of an idea in some form of populist language. Arguments could be made that something like this exists in a few examples from the second century apologetic works,⁷ it also seems that the apologetic arguments under discussion did not seek to give themselves an actively populist voice in asserting their

⁷ Cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), 37: "We have filled every place among you— cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum" as one such example of an appeal to the populism and popularity of the Christian movement.

claims. In a society centered on the community (e.g. that of the second century Roman Empire), it may be difficult to isolate and utilize instances of such language to the extent that a modern apologist may require in order to prevail in a society where individual conscience is the primary arbiter.

Wills again provides us with a voice articulating modern challenges an apologist would necessarily have to overcome. Wills delves into the cultural preference towards individual conscience by providing key examples and insights into how and why such conclusions occur. His focus rests especially with respect to the Catholicism of the Baby Boomers generation, as something which often “ignore[s] or reject[s] teachings that are urged on them as authoritative, essential to their faith, and of great moral significance.”⁸ In making this claim, Wills cites the ban on contraception as a significant break with Vatican and ecclesiastical authority, though he also notes that there is significant controversy for U.S. Catholics in support for abortion, gay unions, divorce and remarriage, and others as well. We can see as operative in this statement an articulated lack of deference to any singular source of authority, as well as a moral and intellectual primacy placed on what the individual may perceive as the morally correct choice.

In a similar vein to describing the role of individual rational agents and primacy on individual conscience, Wills also defines the shape of the Church’s occasionally clumsy and occasionally optimistic approach towards dealing with key elements of modernity which have become prevalent in Western culture. He frames what he considers initial and substantial difficulties of the Church to deal with democratic thought and

⁸ Wills, 272.

governance, using the language of E.L. Woodward and saying that “No machinery existed whereby this power [of temporal and territorial authority] could be surrendered [to democratic movements].”⁹ In framing the difficulties this way, Wills is then free to draw attention to the corollary difficulty the machinery of the Church had in dealing with “a pluralist and secular society like that of America.”¹⁰ In the end, while Wills observes that ultimately the Church through Vatican II provides “a bold defense of freedom of conscience and its call for a confident co-operation with the world,”¹¹ it is clear from his tone and content that he is frustrated by the Church’s (and the papacy’s) lack of eagerness to adapt to a more modern and Enlightened way of conceptualizing the world.

Whether or not one agrees with Wills, who seems to push very hard against Papal/ecclesiastical authority in certain places, he is a voice which seems well able to articulate the problems a modern rational individual may have with the institutional Church. What is perhaps even more significant is that Wills is a scholar and possesses seemingly a great deal of theological literacy, or at the very least a scholarly and holistic knowledge of the trends in the Catholic tradition which led to various situations over the course of its 2000 year history; this obviously includes modes of thought extant in the Church which led up to the modern day situation of the Church (again, especially as it relates to the distinct reality of U.S. Catholicism). This is so significant because Wills is

⁹ Wills, 192. See also E.L. Woodward, *Three Studies in European Conservatism*, (Constable, 1929), 246.

¹⁰ Wills, 203.

¹¹ Wills, 230.

perhaps better able to articulate his criticisms of modern Church apologetics¹² and practices than a typical lay person might be able to.

While it would be perhaps presumptive to assume Wills' arguments speak for all who have like-minded criticisms of the Church, his articulation of these things must be dealt with in some sense, *because* he is able to articulate it. He has the literacy to bring the problems to the forefront and demand in some way that an account be offered for them, which is something that again, many other lay Catholics might struggle to do, even if they have the same fundamental issues. Therefore, Wills serves as this thesis' devil's advocate in many places, providing a voice which brings to light some of the problems, both practical and philosophical, the Church must address in its modern apologetic mission. Wills' own logic and arguments are not really on trial here, because for the purposes of this thesis, it matters more that what he says is, in fact, being articulated, and less so whether or not it is perfectly internally consistent or otherwise adheres directly with the teachings of the Church. Wills' perspective and directionality of thought seems to be sufficiently representative of modern modes of thought and the Baby Boomer locus of power, interpreting the Catholic Tradition through this lens more so than he seems to interpret the culture through the lens of Church Tradition; we may therefore use Wills as a legitimate voice espousing these views from a place within the Church itself.

¹² I use the term apologetics because Wills' tone and the probing questions and statements he puts forward in his book seem to be crying out for some kind of accountability or defense if one can be provided. Wills himself seems to have a prevailing argument that certain aspects of the Church are indefensible in many ways, or that the present defenses offered (*vis-à-vis* things like female ordination, etc.) are too weak to genuinely answer a modern audience. The rhetoric and content of his book (especially the chapters dealing with more modern developments) carry a tone which is then genuinely concerned with the apologetic aspect of the Catholic Church, even if Wills himself has trouble accepting the defenses presently offered for it.

Wills, in a key way, is emblematic of the final major difference we will discuss between the modern age and the second century: the directionality by which one looks at culture or society on one hand and religion on the other. I would like to say first and foremost that, even if the language I have utilized suggests it, I do not in any way intend to make a strict binary between culture and religion, nor do I wish to portray them as constantly and inevitably at odds with one another. The focus in this final examination of difference is on the directionality by which these two spheres interact rather than on the assumption of their opposition to one another.

That said, Wills seems in many ways to be emblematic of a key observation Muldoon has regarding the Vatican II and post-Vatican II generations (of which Wills is very much a member). Of such cohorts Muldoon suggests that “their formation has been more profoundly influenced by popular culture than by Catholicism, and so they are likely to see the terms of their faith through the lens of culture rather than vice versa.”¹³ It is a directionality of this nature that provides a key challenge to the modern apologist that those of the second century did not have to face. Again, this situation owes itself largely to there being no real distinction in the minds of people between discrete entities of society and culture on one side and religion on the other. The two were intrinsic parts of each other which, while they might vary in practice and belief from location to location, were on the whole inseparable entities. While the apologists of the second century tried to articulate the importance and relevance of Christianity in a culture which had difficulty processing it, there was never really a question about how one could or should blend

¹³ Muldoon, 9.

culture and religion in an amicable way; again, such was already the state of affairs. This is a key difference to note, in that its modern iteration adds another layer of complexity to the apologetic mission which was not really present in the world of the second century.

It seems then that the fundamental areas of difficulty in translating forward the works of second century apologists take on a few distinct forms and raise a few very crucial issues. In the first place, we have seen how there is room for at least a *perceived* element of hypocrisy in some apologetic rhetoric, with a perceived allowance for equivocation when it suits the apologist. This problem seems to have existed to some extent in the work of second century apologists like Justin, and if Wills is to be believed, still seems to be problematic as regards certain areas of Church teaching. Following from this, we have several problematic effects relevant to the separation of the religious sphere from that of the society as a whole. Primary among these effects were (1) the overall lack of a singular voice or body of authority which could be addressed, (2) the significance value of the rational individual and subsequent need for an apologetic suited to a more or less populist vocabulary, and (3) the establishment of a directionality when viewing religion through culture or culture through religion. Each of these areas represents not only a challenge for modern apologists but also a problem for the voice of second century apologists we are attempting to bring forward in the course of this thesis.

It is important to note that in calling these aspects problematic, I am not at all attempting to suggest they are somehow bad or should be overturned or abandoned. My interest in using this term is strictly with respect to the main objective of this thesis to discern the extent to which the second century apologists can speak to the cultural and societal context of the twenty first century. These aspects are problematic then in the

sense that they complicate the apologists' ability to do that by drastically changing the playing field to terrain which the likes of Justin, Tertullian and Athenagoras would ultimately find uncomfortable and difficult to understand, let alone difficult to navigate given their own individual cultural contexts.

The challenges outlined in the preceding section have in some way at least, provided us then with a map of the landscape that modern apologetics must navigate. In doing this as well, it has given some more decisive answers to us as concerns areas where the second century apologists might be applicable voices of wisdom. Some avenues of the apologetic project once open to the early Fathers of the Church seem to have been lost and walled over as more or less impassable routes for the defense of the faith and the persuasion of the unconvinced. However, this information is still quite useful as it narrows the parameters wherein the apologetic mission must operate and what its goals must eventually be. It, in some ways, helps to spell out the direction the Church must go if it desires to engage its audience. As the Church is directed towards a specified form of contact with society, we now turn our attention to addressing these topics concerning the space of operation for the apologetic mission and the goals to be achieved.

Section 3.2 -- Challenges to Apologetic Engagement and Legitimization in Secular Society

Despite the challenges articulated in the previous section, it serves us at this point to remember the two major tasks of the apologetic project, and then subsequently to examine what implications the challenges discussed in the previous section and the similarities discussed in chapter one can come together in order to advise the course of modern apologetics. This section will act in the interests of doing just that, first

articulating the two major and general objectives of what apologetics¹⁴ strives to do: (1) to legitimize the Church to the community or society it inhabits, and (2) to speak in a language which is best able to communicate the message and defense of the Church in a way that is both comprehensible and palatable to the given audience. These are the objectives which stem out of our analysis of the second century apologists and which certainly seem to have traction in the modern context as well. In this section we will look at each objective in detail to understand how the aforementioned similarities and differences directly affect each objective. Finally, this section will then attempt to spell out what consequences and lessons emerge when we attempt a comparison of this nature.

Let us turn to the first aim of apologetics: the legitimization of Church in the eyes of the surrounding society. The task of doing this in the present day, as we have seen in the challenges described above, is one which is in many ways a marked departure from the task of doing so almost two millennia ago. To this end we must first discuss the methodology available to modern apologists by which the Church is able to ensure that it has a voice which is seen to be one of legitimacy and authority in the world, and following this, come to an understanding of what ground this puts the Church on with respect to entering into discourse with the secular world.

As observed in the first section of this chapter, a key component of the modern world, and one which distinguishes it from the second century, is the general prevalence

¹⁴ A caveat here that this is understanding apologetics through the lens of the actions and methods of the second century apologists. Certainly some could and would debate whether the above is in fact the ultimate aim of apologetics in the modern day, and there is indeed much room to do so. However, when viewing the apologetic task through the second century works and context discussed previously in this chapter, it seems fit to conclude that these are the goals the apologists are largely working towards for better or for worse.

of individuals serving as the primary arbiters of individual truth. This has created a public space which is both pluralistic and, in most instances, decentralized and necessitates a stratagem for legitimacy that respects this situation. Christianity has been placed on the same level as any other institution or faith, and would have difficulty appealing to its history or tradition in any sort of emphatic way to demonstrate its authority to speak on matters of public concern. It is then worth pointing out that such a condition, when viewed and framed as a state of institutional levelling and suspicion of tradition and heritage, is one with which the apologetic fathers were familiar, and one to which they might be able to speak authoritatively.

Indeed, the manner in which the Church becomes legitimized to participate in public discourse was of particular concern to the second century apologists. While it would certainly be anachronistic to identify in the second century anything like a discrete ‘public sphere’ in the modern sense of the term, the apologetic fathers certainly lived in a culture which facilitated discourse and response on various issues of the day. The apologetic writing style itself seems sufficient to illustrate this point, as by its very nature, it connotes a society and a culture wherein an individual or social perspective might be put forward and defended in the realm of public debate. This even seems the case in the *Dialogue*, as Justin is engaged by Trypho to speak on matters of philosophy concerning the Christian faith openly, literally in the public forum.¹⁵

However, we should take care to nuance our conception of where and how such discourses take place, especially as they concern the terrain of modern apologetics. It is

¹⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 1 & 9.

an oversimplification to assume that the public sphere is some kind of singular entity which can be targeted *en masse* by any would-be apologist. The dissolution of any singular overarching target or audience, as was discussed in the previous section, carries with it the consequence of there being a general sphere which we might call ‘public’ but which is certainly not a centralized entity in its own right. In an age where argument is expressed via social media campaigns, 24-hour news cycles, journals and magazines, and we might even include various forms of demagoguery, we might better speak of a numerous assortment of public *spheres* which one participates in, each of which might have individuated rules or standards built from the framework of what the overarching society would consider to be appropriate or not. It is also worth clarifying here that the term ‘public sphere’ used here is defined in a relational sense to that of a ‘private sphere,’ the contents of which are expected to be kept personal to each individual and which should be as divorced as possible from the public sphere. Objects of the private sphere are not something the society should dictate to a person, and conversely a person should not dictate societal norms out of things contained in this sphere.

This injection of the Church into the sometimes ambient and sometimes cacophonous interchange of the public sphere(s) and the Church’s subsequent articulation and defense of the Christian vision is something that is certainly recognizable in the writings of the apologetic Fathers. Concerning this point, Jörg Ulrich in *In Defence of Christianity* argues that while the apologetic effort may not have succeeded in stopping Christian persecution at the hands of the Romans, it nevertheless had an impact: “Christian evangelism was thus very successful during the first three centuries and the apologists played a role in this process, inasmuch as their texts kick-started the debate

with Christianity in certain intellectual, academic circles in the Roman Empire, thereby provoking responses.”¹⁶ Ulrich’s statement here defines the early apologetic movement as one to be judged not by its efficacy in appealing for the legality of Christianity, but rather as a method of engagement which elicits discussion, forcing the public sphere, such as it was in the second century, to at least make reply to the claims of Christianity. Following this point, one could also argue that because it *did* elicit a response, Christianity did, on some level, legitimize itself via the apologists.

However, this task of entering into the discourse, both then and now, necessitates some kind of presentation of credentials in order to be legitimized as a voice worth listening to. In other words, we must ask by what authority and legitimization the Church says what it desires to say, and additionally, if it is given that the Church is able to legitimize itself as a voice within the public sphere, how then does it tangle with the contemporary forces which in some cases, supersede its authority in the minds of the people. This is all the more apparent when coupled with Muldoon’s observation that the majority of lay U.S. Catholics post-Vatican II “emphasized individual conscience over obedience to authority.”¹⁷ It is from this individual conscience that authority is derived, and the advice of the second century apologists seems to suggest that Church would do well to work within it.

The situation at its root in both eras seems to be that the Church has to grapple with a society wherein the locus of public power and legitimate authority is derived from

¹⁶ Jörg Ulrich, “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 30.

¹⁷ Muldoon, 35.

a place outside of the Church and the Gospel. We find in the ancient context leading up to the second century apologists, a culture wherein the public good (cf. the *pax deorum*), with the will of Rome and the Emperor as guiding lights, seemed to undergird a great deal of what constituted authoritative teaching.. This structure of authority also works in tandem with the structures identified in earlier sections of this thesis, such as the authority of antiquity and ethnicity, and the authority of great figures of philosophy, etc. From this perspective, we can soon identify some ways the early Christian Church successfully worked within these memes and tropes, producing a communal language of the Body of Christ which we see in Paul,¹⁸ and even to some extent in Tertullian's apology¹⁹ as well. We may read into these passages then, an attempt to work within the legitimizing structures of the age, and from this understanding consider how such a task might inform the modern Church.

The present day Church has to work within a society which places a premium on freedom of conscience in a way the Church does not. While I do not at all mean to say that the Catholic Church is opposed to the individual conscience, it also asks for a certain and specific formation of that conscience, defined by the Gospel and the Church Tradition.²⁰ The Church presents a new locus of exercising this conscience through the

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 & Ephesians 5:23.

¹⁹ In Chapter 39 of the Apology, Tertullian states that "I shall at once go on, then, to exhibit the peculiarities of the Christian society that, as I have refuted the evil charged against it, I may point out its positive good. We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications." While it is important to note that Tertullian's language does not identify the Church specifically as the Body of Christ in the Pauline sense, he still employs and describes the actions of the Christian communities as that of a singular body operating under divine patronage.

²⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part III, Section 1, Chapter 1, Article 6, 1783-1785.

active and radical encounter of individuals with Christ and subsequent conversion of the individual life of the person to that which is in conformity with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. In many ways, this is much the same as how the second century memes within Christianity interacted with the primarily communal nature of the society of the time, reconstituting it in language of “the Body of Christ”. However, these changes and re-conceptions and recapitulations in both eras, allow for the Church to be viewed as a suspicious entity, and one which, even if it speaks in a language like that of the culture around it, still needs to legitimize itself as a valid figure in the public sphere able to wield its unique use of that language. Framing the discussion once again with an eye towards allowing the second century apologists to come forward, I would argue this leads the Church into two concurrent and comingling apologetic situations.

Firstly, the situation both then and now sets up the Church institutionally as something of a subaltern entity within such societies. Admittedly, it might seem odd at first to suggest that one of the world’s largest, longest-lived, and linguistically prolific institutions is in fact on par with people relegated as voiceless and un-hearable in their own language. However understanding the Church in this context helps us both to understand the present situation in a new light, and allows us a unique avenue by which we might again connect the ancient and modern worlds.

We may say that a significant part of the apologetic efforts in the second century is that in the attempt to present Christianity to a wider and (certainly in the times of the writers relevant to this thesis) hostile world. Justin, Tertullian, and Athenagoras were converts to Christianity and seemed to occupy some not-inconsequential social status

within the Roman Empire, however, they would all qualify as subalterns²¹ by the definition offered by Ranajit Guha, given that at best they seem to be in the same strata as low-level gentry or upper-middle-class peasants.²² Furthermore by adopting Christianity, these men became arguably even more subaltern, abandoning the safeties afforded them as ‘typical’ subalterns and moving into a more suspect class of persons. Persons placed in this group are those who are certainly suspect under the societal elite, and as such are considered to be somehow untrustworthy and therefore unable to represent themselves; they may be able to speak commonly among themselves, but they do not have a voice which goes beyond that. The irony is that despite the prolific writings of these Fathers, they still ultimately are living in this social stratum of the un-hearable persons, and one could certainly infer the extraordinary effect beginning in such a place might have for the nascent Christian movement.

To what extent then can we see the modern context aligning to this image of the early Church, and to what extent does it resist such classification. Extrapolating from one of the writings of most authoritative scholars on the subject, Gayatri Spivak, if we

²¹ It is worth recognizing the danger the use of this term brings to the discussion. In some sense, if we view the apologists as subalterns, as this thesis has done, it risks necessarily making them into collaborators with the ‘secular’ rulers. This is a concern not unlike that expressed by Vaage in the previous chapter that Christianity might ultimately become what it seeks legitimacy from. It also shadows the concerns expressed by Adolf von Harnack in his *History of Dogma* concerning the Hellenization of Christianity and the incorporation of external elements as foundational elements alongside the Gospel and Creed. While the use of subaltern is perhaps dangerous in this way, it highlights the risk inherent in apologetic cooperation with the modes of prevailing culture: that ultimately those modes integrate themselves into the rhetoric and *modus operandi* of Christianity itself. It is indeed not an inconsiderable risk and one which must be taken seriously and with due caution. While my use of subaltern language and discussion here necessitates this aside in the footnotes, we will attempt to handle the questions raised by these dangers later in this chapter via a direct discussion of Harnack’s critique of Hellenization.

²² Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 79.

understand the subaltern as one who is both unheard unless he/she participates in the broader hegemonic project and voiceless because of the broader paradigms which govern it, then we might be able to see the modern Church as something of a subaltern entity. The public/private dichotomy tends to suggest that the Church should not be heard in the public spaces because its proclamations are a matter of individual conscience rather than a public decision; its claims to any kind of truth, defined via a theistic belief cannot be articulated because they do not fit in with the rational ethic. We might here refer back to Habermas and suggest that in some way, the means of entering the debate are controlled and gated by certain prerequisite qualities, accessible only by speaking within very specific parameters, which consequentially means that the Church is not able to speak in its own language. This societal understanding coupled with the term 'subaltern' recreates the Church as a kind of modern subaltern institution, able to speak only within itself.

The second concurrent apologetic situation stems from the fact that, even if it is a subaltern class, the mission of the Church is still one of preaching and evangelization. As a result, even being a suspect class in some ways, the Church must still seek to develop itself with a form of legitimacy which seeks to mesh with the modern arbiter: the dictates of individual conscience. In doing so we must again be aware that most such consciences are more often than not formed via the culture looking at faith rather than faith speaking to culture, and so it then behooves us to understand just what the cultural perception of Christians is and how the Church needs to address such perceptions in order to demonstrate its own legitimate authority.

Both modern and ancient peoples seem to have a kind of image in their heads of what Christians of any stripe should mostly look like, and for various reasons (namely the

relative newness of the Church in the second century, and the deconstruction of Church authority and decrease in Church attendance in the present day) there is also a kind of theological illiteracy²³ which sometimes complicates and sometimes oversimplifies how the Church is perceived. This an area of experience in the second century Church though, where the apologists had to push back, fighting against slanders of incest, cannibalism and atheism in a cultural climate which did not know or understand the developing theology underpinning the arguments the apologists were making. Thus the Christian use of familial terms is viewed as incestuous, the consumption of the Body of Christ at the Eucharistic feast is a cannibalistic act, and the refusal to honor the gods of Rome and/or the general culture becomes a form of atheism. As this section will show, the lesson the modern Church can learn from the early apologists is the order and manner in which one must attempt to deal with these cultural and religious sticking points.

The results of research conducted in these areas of study have suggested results that are at once discouraging and encouraging. A study conducted by Brad Vermurlen of the University of Notre Dame found that of 1,000 the unchurched and dechurched participants,²⁴ that “The respondents tended to understand Christianity as mostly about acceptance, tolerance, and the Golden Rule.”²⁵ Such a perception was then clarified by Vermurlen’s participants: “And they criticized Christians for not living in accordance with those values.” A similar study conducted by LifeWay, an American faith-based

²³ Cf. Muldoon, 50.

²⁴ Vermurlen defines ‘Unchurched’ as attendance at religious service every few months or less, and with no regular attendance of service growing up. ‘Dechurched’ is the same, save for attendance during childhood.

²⁵ Brad Vermurlen, "Perceptions of and Objections to Christianity among Unchurched and Dechurched Adults." *Review of Religious Research* 57, no. 1 (2015): 161-62.

organization designed to provide resources to Christian ministries, found similar results, with 72% of 1,400 unchurched participants saying that the Church is full of hypocrites, but with 71% of that same 1,400 considering Jesus to be a positive influence in a person's life.²⁶ These results suggest that in some ways that it is not Christian doctrine²⁷ that is on trial, rather it is the lived action of Christians.²⁸ Muldoon observes that for younger Catholics "Church is a place where midlife suburbanites go to be comforted, to be told that their lives really need not change"²⁹ and that such a perception is incongruous with a Gospel they understand as challenging and life-changing.

Again, I would suspect that many of the participants whose replies made up the data in the previous paragraph probably do not possess the kind of theological literacy to delve into the particulars of Church doctrine or into its history to come to an understanding of how and why the Church teaches what it does.³⁰ Pope Francis states in *Evangelii Gaudium* "We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience

²⁶ Mark Kelly, "Unchurched Americans Turned off by Church, Open to Christians," *LifeWay*, Jan 9, 2008, Accessed July 5, 2016. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/LifeWay-Research-finds-unchurched-Americans-turned-off-by-church-open-to-Christians>.

²⁷ It is worth noting here that Vermurlen's survey did find certain issues where the values un/dechurched did clash with Church doctrine, and I do want to qualify the above statement by acknowledging that many individuals do have intellectual and doctrinal problems with Church teaching as opposed to only thinking that the Church does not practice what it preaches. My intent in the above statement is an interpretation of some of the primary findings reported in the cited surveys and studies.

²⁸ One might argue that the interpretations of the life of Christ given by such individuals is likely quite erroneous, but in an age wherein the individual conscience is as entrenched as it is, such interpretations must still be dealt with in a way which cooperates with that conscience, rather than attempting to disarm it straightaway. The task of apologetic instruction is greatly, and I might say unnecessarily, complicated when these interpretations are set aside or dismissed because they are wrong or out of line with Church teaching. Such an approach would likely be interpreted as overriding the individual conscience of the individual in question, and probably would result in turning them off from learning the literacy of interpretation they are presumed to be lacking.

²⁹ Muldoon, 29.

³⁰ This, again, is one reason why Wills contributions in this thesis are valuable, because in many ways they articulate contrary positions with the literacy background which gives them more credence than what most lay Christians could probably describe.

understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty, and attractiveness,”³¹ and Francis himself serves as a primary example of attempting to live out this statement, at once offering the opportunity to belay charges of hypocrisy and invigorate, by ‘attractiveness,’ a world which makes determinations based on individual conscience.

The visibility of a figure like Francis seems a precedent setting event in the history of the Church. He seems in many ways to be a figure who practices what he preaches and importantly, is viewed as someone who does so as well. The popular image of Francis as a pope who would sneak out of the Vatican to feed and be with the homeless,³² who would make a special effort to kiss and bless a disfigured man³³ and a disabled child,³⁴ and as a figure who would allow a young boy to sit in his chair while he was giving an address,³⁵ are images which resonate in the modern mind as representative of a genuine Christian. Whether or not all of these stories are factual (though I have attempted to source each instance in the footnotes below), they are *stories* which seem to resonate with the popular perception of what a Christian should be and fit the pope into that schema. The pope’s actions, at least as documented in many forms of mass media, comport with the image of a man who is humble and Christ-like in the minds of those

³¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, (Washington DC: USCCB, 2013), 9.

³² Scott Keys, “Pope Francis Sneaks out of the Vatican at Night to Feed the Homeless,” *Think Progress*, Published Dec. 3, 2013, <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/12/03/3011421/pope-francis-homeless/>

³³ Faith Karimi, “Pope Francis’ Embrace of a Severely Disfigured Man Touches World,” *CNN*, Published Nov. 7, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/07/world/europe/pope-francis-embrace/>

³⁴ Tracy Connor, “Family Overjoyed by Pope Francis’ Kiss for Disabled Son,” *NBC News*, Published Sept. 29, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/pope-francis-visits-america/family-overjoyed-pope-francis-kiss-disabled-son-n434346>

³⁵ Amy Hubbard, “Boy Takes Stage with Pope Francis, Hugs Him, Won’t Leave,” *Los Angeles Times*, Published Oct. 30, 2013, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-sh-boy-stage-pope-francis-20131030-story.html>

who consume that media, and in this, the savvy of Francis lends legitimacy to Catholicism-at-large.

The general believability and virality of these stories should not be dismissed either, especially in an age where some might feel a kind of information and news overload in the sheer amount of headlines vying for attention in one's Facebook, Twitter or other RSS feeds. The themes of these stories seem demonstrative of the prevailing knowledge of Truth possessed by most people and expected of those who claim to preach it. Their virality resonates from the knowledge that Christianity is something that is rooted more in inspired actions which sculpt one's life rather than being a list of doctrines and dogmas to be learned and adhered to. It is this kind of authenticity that Francis speaks of as being a task for clergy and lay persons alike and as being the attractive element in Christianity. But therein lies the rub and so to lies the job of the apologist outlined by the second century apologetic Fathers. In attempting to follow their example and ultimately speak with a language and a legitimacy respected by the surrounding culture, there is a simultaneous urgency and cautiousness necessary.

On one hand, we can make a keen argument for founding Church legitimacy on this kind of apologetics of action as a means of genuinely reaching people who are suspicious of the Church, but at the same time, there must be a cautiousness to ensure that the Church does not simply become a self-help group or a community outreach. While such outreaches are perhaps elements of the lived ministry of the Church, perhaps even vital ones, they should not be viewed as ends in themselves. Smith and Denton have a similar caution, stating that "Making [social goods] into religion's key legitimating focus easily degenerates into a church-is-good-because-it-will-help-keep-my-kid-off-drugs-

and-increase-their-seatbelt-use mentality. This obviously undermines larger and deeper questions of truth, tradition, discipleship, and peoplehood that matter to communities of faith.”³⁶ This thesis is not advocating such a trajectory and is certainly wary of the risks that such a direction would pose to the health of what truly makes the Church what it is. Rather, what I am suggesting is the aforementioned need to appeal to the individual conscience requires the apologist to be aware of what seems to drain legitimacy out of the Church before one can focus on ensuring there is some in it. These challenges posed by a world governed by individual conscience are worthy of consideration regardless of whether the Church is acting as an institution or as constituent members. Little can be done verbally to advance the apologetic effort as a whole if by its actions the Church is hemorrhaging legitimacy by being or appearing hypocritical. It must be visibly able to support its good faith with good works.

Here again the second century apologists prove instructive to the modern Church. Each apologist discussed in this thesis begins his apology with a claim to justice, and an assurance that Christians are innocent of the charges against them, if only the judging parties would deign to truly investigate the Church. To that end, we must be prepared to issue the same challenge Athenagoras does in his apology, stating “If, indeed, anyone can convict us of a crime, be it small or great, we do not ask to be excused from punishment, but are prepared to undergo the sharpest and most merciless inflictions. But if the accusation relates merely to our name [let such an accusation be dismissed for the sake of

³⁶ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 270.

what is right.]”³⁷ The study of the second century apologists demands a modern response of openness and even invitation to external examination of the Church itself. While we must not be so naïve as to think that the modern meta-narratives (e.g. liberal vs. conservative, religion vs. science, etc.) will not be applied to whatever is found in such investigations, at the same time it seems a counterproductive step to bar inquiry that does not necessarily share the same language and narratives of the Church. The institutional Church and individual Christians cannot be squeamish about inviting investigation into the life of the Church, for if the Church is meant to be attractive it must be secure enough to be inviting to those outside of it. It is also telling that only once the second century apologists had issued such an invitation (or challenge, depending on the tone one interprets from the given work) could they then have the space to offer verbal apologetics for what that investigation might reveal to a culture inherently suspicious of it.

Section 3.3 – The Potential Pitfalls of Apologetic Language

It is with this pattern in mind that we now turn to the second major task of the apologist: the ability to speak in a language understood by the audience. It should be observed straightaway that there is an inherent challenge in this task, as there exists some fundamental differences in the ethos governing the secular sphere versus that of the Church; this challenge poses the danger of potentially selling out the Church in order to make it palatable or otherwise allowing elements which could prove corrosive to the Gospel to seep into the Church and do so. However, without the theological skill and

³⁷ Athenagoras, *Plea For Christians*, found in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, Vol. II Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, ed. James Donaldson and Rev. Alexander Roberts. trans Rev. Marcus Dods, Rev. B. P. Pratten, and Rev. George Reith. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874), Ch. 2.

courage to be able to translate, articulate, and defend the Gospel message in terms which are accessible to those who are not versed in such a discussion, we are only left with a Church that is an echo chamber unto itself. Preaching to the choir may be the way to get them to sing, but all one is left with in such a situation is a concert, not a liturgy. This penultimate stretch of the chapter will attempt to grapple with these issues, and again continually ask where the wisdom and skill of the second century apologists might again support the task of the present day Church.

In addressing this apologetic task, let us first attempt to understand some of the areas of concern surrounding this aspect of the apologetic mission. The question here largely boils down to variant concerns on the common theme of the extent to which the Church's use and/or appropriation of external language provides a means of ingress for the surrounding culture to somehow distort the Gospel and the Church's teaching. While there are certainly numerous voices, scholarly and plebian, lay and religious, who have brought forward concerns of this nature to the discussion, in the interests of specificity, this thesis will focus on two which seem to stand out in the field. We will first look at Adolf von Harnack's criticism of the early apologetic efforts for introducing a Hellenizing element into the at-the-time pure Christian faith. While Harnack is certainly a figure of some academic controversy and many have contested his claims and their implications, what he articulates in this vein is, if not wholly correct, at least wholly vocative of the concern in question. The second figure will be Alasdair MacIntyre, primarily through his work *After Virtue*. Through this, MacIntyre provides a criticism of the Kantian ethic that religion can be fit into society by reason and moral action, and in his criticism provides us with a more modern voice articulating concern for the

implications of a Christianity attempting to interact with such an ethic on opposing ground, or conceding ground to such an ethic.

Harnack's criticism of the early apologists seems to point to a concern that Christianity's growing entanglement with the philosophical systems of ancient Greece and Rome over the course of the apologetic period ultimately created a system which diminished the Gospel and put dogma on center stage within the Church. Harnack's painting of dogma seems to suggest that it develops out of a need for philosophical consistency and argument rather than out of the natural consequences of living and apply the message of Christ. While Harnack's Protestant heritage should not be forgotten in the structure of his argument and his academic suspicion of the dogmatics of the (Catholic) Church, his criticisms seem broad enough and close enough to the roots of Christianity that we can attempt to understand his criticisms independently of this and focus on these parts of the apologetic discourse. Harnack writes in his *History of Dogma*:

Dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel. . . . It became the instrument by which the Church conquered the ancient world and educated the modern nations. . . . But a third element has been thrust into the history of this religion, viz., dogma, that is, the philosophical means which were used in early times for the purpose of making the Gospel intelligible have been fused with the contents of the Gospel and raised to dogma. This dogma, next to the Church, has become a real world power, the pivot in the history of the Christian religion. The transformation of the Christian faith into dogma is indeed no accident, but has its reason in the spiritual character of the Christian religion, which at all times will feel the need of a scientific apologetic.³⁸

³⁸ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma Vol. 1*, trans. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895), 17-18. The long quote form was chosen here in the interest of providing what I felt to be a core statement of Harnack's thoughts on the matter, and the manner in which Harnack constructed this particular argument is tight enough in its logical flow to defy attempts to piecemeal phrases or sentences out of it.

We may cite here in Harnack's words an admiration for the way in which Greek forms entered into the voice of the Church, coupled with misgivings about their ingress as well. Harnack acknowledges the end-game effectiveness of this blending between Greek and 'pure'-Christian thought, and its overall role in the broader context of its day. However, one can little miss Harnack's ostracizing of these aspects of early Christianity,³⁹ viewing them as 'third elements' which had been brought into the Church in the interest of the apologetic argument. His language paints these philosophical means, which were brought in to support early apologetics, with a fairly negative, almost idolatrous brush; he asserts that it was these elements, rather than the Gospel message, which became 'the real world power' around which the religion pivoted, and ultimately insinuates that they are a detriment to the Christian faith as a whole. Such often remains Harnack's tone throughout much of the *History*, prompting Jörg Ulrich to cite him as primary among the more recent voices supporting the notion that "the apologists [can be] accused of 'Hellenizing' Christianity,"⁴⁰ and in so doing, calling into question the theological legitimacy of such a mixing of the Gospel with what might be perceived as external elements.

The assessment and treatment of Harnack given thus far leads to more or less the same conclusions that William V. Rowe comes to in "Adolf von Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization." However, Rowe's nuancing of what exactly is meant by

³⁹ This is not unlike Placher's conceptualization of the intermingling of Greek thought and Christian thought in the previous chapter. Harnack's use of terminology like 'third elements' seems to share the same suppositions as Placher's use of 'compromise'; that is, something external to the Church is somehow gaining a say in how the Church should operate and what it should believe.

⁴⁰ Jörg Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century," in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 25.

Hellenization offers a more fine-tuned understanding of Harnack's use of that term and bears inclusion here. Rowe's overall conclusion of Harnack's reading vis-à-vis Hellenization and the apologists is that "If Harnack does not approve [of the imbued philosophical spirit], at least he appreciated the labor of Hellenization for [enabling the Church to overcome its rivals]."⁴¹ However, Rowe defines Harnack's Hellenization dualistically; first he addresses a positive Hellenism "in which a certain element in Hellenistic culture was *posited* as something Christian,"⁴² as a primary tool used by the apologists in their arguments. By and large, this is a description which the present thesis agrees with wholeheartedly, reinterpreting aspects of Greco-Roman culture and philosophy via a Christian hermeneutical lens. But Rowe also defines a negative Hellenism within the current of Harnack's thought which exists, in Rowe's words, "through the Church's negation of a movement external to itself."⁴³ Rowe cites Harnack's treatment of Gnosticism as emblematic of this kind of Hellenism and ultimately suggests that Harnack believes Christianity's attempt to refute the Hellenizing influence of Gnosticism only created a more deeply Hellenized Church as such a Church needed to adopt more and more strict doctrines and dogmas, necessitating a deepening current of Hellenized thought within the growing Christian movement. Rowe's nuance then, leaves us with Harnack offering two concerns regarding apologetic interaction and translation in culture: (1) the appropriation of external (Hellenized) language is, while

⁴¹ William V. Rowe, "Adolf von Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization" in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Wendy E. Hellenman, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 81.

⁴² Rowe, 78. Emphasis in original.

⁴³ Rowe, 82.

effective, still something which threatens to usurp the primary language of the Gospel, and (2) by trying to negate a given movement, one risks adopting part of that movement into the corpus as a whole.

With this nuanced and qualified understanding of Harnack's criticisms set forth, let us turn to the more contemporarily focused Alasdair MacIntyre and his assessment of similar challenges as they face the modern apologist. The thrust of MacIntyre's argument is that the methods adopted by the Enlightenment vis-à-vis religion operate more or less solely as a vehicle for determining what is or is not moral; this has left both (religious) belief and morality in a very tenuous position. Recognizing in the present day a culture which has acclimatized itself towards secularism, necessitating a departure from the beliefs and modes of believing which had previously governed humanity for a good deal of its history, MacIntyre observes that "It is not surprising that key questions arose about the justification of belief, and most of all about the justification of moral belief".⁴⁴ In raising the question of how one justifies one's beliefs and specifically moral belief, MacIntyre brings Kantian ethics into the discussion, viewing them as almost paternal in providing the vocabulary and philosophy for morality in the Enlightenment.

MacIntyre's use of Kantian ethics is fairly thorough and primarily critical. MacIntyre outlines Kant's argument, especially with respect to morality as defined by God, as being redundant; MacIntyre's argument goes that if God had ordered us to do something and we knew we ought to do it because God said so, then we would have to have sufficient capacity to reason justly and morally to begin with in order to know that

⁴⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 38.

we ought to do what God commands.⁴⁵ MacIntyre summarizes Kantian ethics on this point, stating that “it is the essence of reason that it lays down principles which are universal, categorical, and internally consistent. Hence a rational morality will lay down principles which both can and ought to be held by *all* men, independent of circumstances and conditions, and which could be consistently obeyed by every rational agent on every occasion.”⁴⁶ It is at this point that MacIntyre critiques Kant for too broad a brush with respect to applying moral thinking, and observes that ridiculous situations can pass Kant’s universalizing test, while actions which are certainly moral sometimes struggle.

MacIntyre believes fervently in the failure of the Enlightenment project to produce a suitable and internally consistent philosophical morality. In MacIntyre’s mind, this failure results from divorcing morality from God,⁴⁷ or at the very least, from an Aristotelian notion of “man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-telos.”⁴⁸ MacIntyre feels that if this process were to some extent reversed, and if Aristotelian notions of ethics were again allowed priority over those of Kant, one could once again speak of a moral philosophy present in the modern age. He observes in its totality the problem and solution in the conclusion to *After Virtue*, stating that:

⁴⁵ MacIntyre, 45.

⁴⁶ MacIntyre, 45.

⁴⁷ MacIntyre, 60. As a further commentary on this phrase, it is important to note that MacIntyre is not speaking of God as conceptual or as an idea, but as a reality, and as a kind of telos. MacIntyre conceives God as a reality that does not exist as a function of human thought or as a construct which then is functionally able to hand down a Kantian categorical imperative; the reality of God for MacIntyre is such that one is shaped in the image of it, not in some senses creating it out of rational maxims which can be adjusted as the prevailing winds of power and society dictate. It is in this sense that God is divorced from morality, as, for MacIntyre, a morality without an ontological and real telos (that is, God) is a morality which cannot defend itself from relativism or from an awareness that there is no ‘true’ morality. It all becomes made up, and therein lies the failure.

⁴⁸ MacIntyre, 54.

My own conclusion is very clear; it is that on the one hand we still, in spite of the efforts of three centuries of moral philosophy and one of sociology, lack any coherent rationally defensible statement of a liberal individualist point of view; and that, on the other hand, the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments.⁴⁹

Positing a world philosophically armed with moral philosophical consistency, MacIntyre believes that many of the difficulties plaguing claims to moral authority, whether from the over-empowered individual or from institutions like the Church, will ultimately cease to trouble us.

MacIntyre's argument serves as a key hermeneutical lens supported by Smith and Denton's findings in *Soul Searching*. A glance at the endnotes for the text reveals that MacIntyre's philosophy played an integral role in the interpretations of their data,⁵⁰ yet in the minds of Smith and Denton, their research seems to yield support for MacIntyre's case. With respect to American teens in the 2000's, Smith and Denton observe that:

One of the key teenage assumptions in this religion-morality equation is that right and wrong are simply common sense, something everyone just knows... whether they choose to live morally or not is simply their individual choice. Nobody therefore needs religion to specify what is right and wrong. The good, the right, and the true are not per se defined as the will or word of God.⁵¹

This finding directly dovetails with the earlier quotes from MacIntyre's text. Individuals in the modern age operate under the assumption that the rational agent has the capacity to choose what is moral, because, being rational, they inherently know it through reason.

Smith and Denton also include MacIntyre's presupposition of a teleology, noting that "a morally significant universe has a telos, an end, goal, and standard, by which one knows

⁴⁹ MacIntyre, 259.

⁵⁰ See endnote 4 on page 318 of *Soul Searching*, as well as endnote 15 on pg. 321.

⁵¹ Smith and Denton, 155.

where one is and to where one is headed.”⁵² All of this is in pursuit of analyzing the data they have gathered which seems to indicate that with respect to the 267 interviews with U.S. teenagers that makes up their study,⁵³ the teens themselves were speaking in the philosophical language and with the philosophical assumptions which MacIntyre critiques, without even realizing that they were doing so.

This observation by Smith and Denton returns us to a previously articulated point which helps us better tie together this section. It seems that the kind of apologetic discourse needed in the second century and likewise needed now must account for the theological illiteracy common to both periods. Muldoon underscores the problem by identifying the language in which the Church often speaks as one which “produces scholarship accessible only to an intellectual elite... or religious intelligentsia.”⁵⁴ While such discourse is not in the least unimportant, and serves to expound on and extrapolate from the central message of the Gospel, it often does not serve the apologetic needs of those who exist outside such intellectual spheres and even more so does not serve those who live outside the Church itself. The prevailing level of theological (il)literacy evident in the world requires a different approach in such a culture.

When the secular presupposition is that one does not necessarily need God or religion in order to discern right from wrong, and when the internal logic of the Church is inextricably based in such a claim, one seems to be at an impasse. Put succinctly and colloquially, attempts to translate the discourse on Truth inherent to the Church via a

⁵² Smith and Denton, 157.

⁵³ Smith and Denton, 119.

⁵⁴ Muldoon, 44.

language and rationale of “Because God said so” is suspect and non-operative in many modern day discourses. This makes arguing for legitimization and apologetics via such language difficult, or at best, presumptive that such a rationale would be acceptable to the society in which it operates. Likewise, such an assumption seems antithetical to the virtues and values of a modern secular society. Charles Taylor might argue that the way clear rests in the Enlightenment virtue to analyze an idea based on its rational merits, rather than on its motives, and then discern the proper course from there,⁵⁵ but one suspects that MacIntyre might find this approach philosophically inconsistent, even though it may also be temporally pragmatic.

The position that these two thinkers, Harnack and MacIntyre, leave us with is one which could be seen as precarious. One needs must be truly sensitive to the concerns expressed in Harnack and MacIntyre, but also aware of the necessity for the apologists to speak in a language understood by the audience, all but assuring some level of mixing. The relative level of theological literacy dictates such an approach, as the apologist must know the extent to which they can rely on the knowledge of their audience, and then address it accordingly. Harnack’s concern over a foreign element bleeding into the purity of the Gospel and changing it or the direction of the Church is a valid one; likewise, MacIntyre’s ultimate conclusion that an ethic based on a telos, such as that contained within Christianity, must be protected from the meddling of outside barbarians who would seek to force it to mold to ‘rationality’ is a likewise understandable and necessary concern for the apologetic project. In short, these are voices and risks which need to be

⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, “The Meaning of Secularism”, *The Hedgehog Review* Vol 12, no. 3 : 33, Accessed April 4, 2016, http://iasc-culture.org/THR/THR_article_2010_Fall_Taylor.php.

discerned and carefully thought over in the process of defining the mission of the Church in a modern culture. One must be careful not to abandon the eternal for the temporal, but it is my sense that Harnack and MacIntyre posit more literacy than what seems to be the case, and likewise assume that if only that literacy was capitalized on in different ways, the risks of external interaction would be somehow lessened.

However, these premises and suppositions do not seem to be the case on a number of different levels. Internal to the Church, the work of Smith and Denton showed that their interviewees were inculcated with a heuristic assuming that right and wrong are common sense, knowable through reason; expressing theological and ethical values without the more heady language typically used to do so. Muldoon also points out a similar case with the post-Vatican II generation may not be able to “articulate what [Vatican II] teachings are, or that they came from the Council, or that there even was a notable Church council during the 1960s... [However] young-adult Catholics have internalized what the Council wrote about.”⁵⁶ And external to the Church, Vermurlen’s work seems to suggest that the questions being articulated by the unchurched are ones which do have answers, but those answers seem to prove unsatisfactory to the sensibilities of such individuals. However, the situation defined as such points us once again towards the second century apologists.

The primary lesson of the second century to this end, is demonstrative of a need for blending. This can be intuited from the second century apologists’ efforts to couch things in the language of Greco-Roman myth and philosophy and culture, while in many

⁵⁶ Muldoon, 51.

ways avoiding the deeper questions of faith that become relevant usually only after one accepts Christianity as legitimate. Furthermore, as we saw in the previous chapter, even the more vocal anti-philosopher Tertullian, was never the less couched in, given to, and portrayed as related to the self-same trend he was ostensibly rebelling against; and arguably such currents were part of the reason for his ability to address the concerns of his time. One might even cite or point to Harnack's own words acknowledging that Christianity's success to some extent hinged on its ability to Hellenize, and though he is critical of such additions, it is also telling that Harnack recognizes the strength of doing so. The culture rooted in a Kantian ethic and upon the individual conscience must be seen as the Hellenization force to which the Church must speak.

Section 3.4 – The Course for Modern Apologetics as Assisted by the Second Century Apologists

The modern apologetic effort has many pitfalls to avoid. The first section of this chapter defined the problems of modernity via a discussion of how the Church could best attempt to legitimize itself. These challenges posed by the prevailing dominance of the individual conscience and a general suspicion of institutions allowed the second section of this chapter to bring the apologetic fathers forward and suggest a course of open invitation to examine Church life, placing the onus for staving off hypocrisy in the lived consistency of the Church's claims. The third section voiced the concerns for the manner in which the Church might choose to engage with the external and secular world via Harnack's criticism of the Hellenization of the early Church and MacIntyre's criticism of the end-game or lack thereof of a society run under Kantian ethic. The engine driving the criticisms of these scholars seem to be a concern for the incompatibility of ethos and a

suspicion of corruption of ideals in a process of mixing and dialogue. Furthermore, an additional conclusion drawn by this thesis framed the concerns of these scholars within a setting of theological (il)literacy, calling into question the viability of the trajectory suggested by their criticisms, and leaning on the apologetic work of the second century to support the counter-claim of the necessity of some kind of ‘Hellenization.’

However, we must now turn to the more verbal part of the apologetic discourse, and understand what kind of actual dialogue needs to take place. As much as the preceding section of this chapter advocates a legitimacy and invitation via social action, it also needs to be followed up on by a verbal component which seeks to develop the kind of theological literacy from the illiteracy which prioritizes social action as the starting point. There must be a component which becomes the subsequent support for the work of the action. The second century apologists demonstrate this by, following their initial invitation for external investigation of the Church, spending more or less the entirety of the subsequent chapters in their respective works elaborating on the significance and the beliefs undergirding what such an investigation would necessarily find. In this section we must understand the key interplay of three major concepts, all of which are demonstrated in the second century apologists. We will first look at the notion of hybridity vis-à-vis the postcolonial school of thought, then we will attempt to understand the tenuous distinction between apologetic and evangelization, and finally we will touch on the role of the evidence provided in the discussions of both the second century and today.

The notion of hybridity is key in how the apologists seem to operate. While we did define the term in chapter one, and made some use of it in chapter two, it is important to remember that the notion of hybrid stems from the individual who has something of

two natures to him/herself. Not theological natures of human and divine, but cultural ones which in many ways allow the individual to serve as a go-between or a “native informant for the first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other”⁵⁷ and Bhabha’s description of the person inhabiting the in-between spaces.⁵⁸ As even Harnack recognizes, a great deal of the apologetic success came from the ability to couch the Gospel in Hellenic (or otherwise amenable) terms. The apologists of the second century were uniquely placed as converts who have undertaken to define the shape of that which they converted to, and in doing so provide an articulation as Christians to the prevailing Greco-Roman culture because of the in-between space they occupied. As much as one might consider Paul, as Ronald Charles does, an example of this same schema playing out qua Christianity and Judaism, the rhetorical success of the second century apologists owes a great deal to the hybrid nature they were able to tap into and utilize. By demonstrating a key knowledge of the figures and currents which shaped the society in which they lived, an understanding of what constituted the voices of authority and the language that could articulate Christian belief in terms intelligible to outsiders, they leave us asking the extent to which their experience in these matters might relate to ours.

Translating them forward, we should investigate what hybridity might look like in the present day Church, and if it exists, how can it aid in the apologetic mission. It behooves us here to return to Gary Wills, a figure who seems to be thoroughly modern in his outlook, and very much an individual shaped by the culture which surrounds him. Yet despite this, and despite the fact that his critiques of the Church cited in this paper must

⁵⁷ Spivak, 79.

⁵⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 19.

be viewed as modern criticisms, Wills nevertheless professes adherence to that body, and in the final part of his book, offers a defense of Christianity via the Creed. Wills is perhaps most telling of his apology when he says “[The teachings of the Church] form a penumbra (sometimes a dark one) around the core beliefs always affirmed, those best summarized in the Creed.”⁵⁹ What follows from this introduction is an apology for that which Wills considers at the core of the Christian faith, focusing on central tenets of the Creed, from the necessity of the personhood of God, the divinity of Christ over and against the descriptor of him being simply a supremely good man, and the ultimate eschatological arc of Christianity and the subsequent mission and faith that entails.⁶⁰ In many ways Wills’ own modernity which proved troublesome earlier in the text is now his ally as it defines the shape of how the arguments must be constructed and the language necessary to articulate a defense in the face of challenges to the core tenets of belief.

My sense is that ultimately Wills is prototypical of a modern apologist and the hybridity which can ultimately be channeled in defense of the faith itself, even if it also troubles some elements of doctrine. We must not forget that even among the apologetic fathers, some of their beliefs would prove inconsistent with the ultimate teachings of the Church, whether it is Justin's subordinationism⁶¹ or Tertullian’s eventual slide into Montanism.⁶² The defenders themselves may not be in perfect alignment with all aspects

⁵⁹ Wills, 295.

⁶⁰ Wills, 308, 316-318, & 330-332 respectively.

⁶¹ See Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948), Ch. 13.

⁶² See Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol 1*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 172 where Gonzalez observes that “Early in the third century – probably in A.D. 207 – he left the communion of the African Church in order to become a Montanist. The reasons why he took this step are not clear, but it seems that Montanism embodied for him the spirit of protest against the growing power of the hierarchy and against its supposed laxity in dealing with repentant sinners. It was this aspect of Montanism which appealed to Tertullian, who had always shown excessive moral rigor.”

of past, present, and future Church teaching, but it is important to remember that even in spite of that, the defenses they offer are no less valid, stirring, or genuine expressions of faith in the face of adversity.

This discussion leads us however, into a keen understanding of modern apologetics and the line between it and the role of evangelism. If we continue to understand the second century as speaking to the present, we must also understand this distinction. The second century apologists' first aim as dictated by their circumstances seems to have been a case of defense rather than conversion. While one could cite instances requesting the conversion of the target audience,⁶³ by and large the arguments offered to the outside world were those of legitimizing and defending Christianity with the aim to avoid persecution and the other injustices articulated by the apologists. Doubtless they would have been thrilled with the conversion of their addressees, but the apologies themselves come off more as a plea for tolerance and justice than as statements intended specifically for the conversion of their readers. We might at best call apologetic rhetoric 'preparatory' for conversion, though likely not a conversion instance itself.

Taking this direction forward into the present day, one must understand the extent to which evangelism and apologetics relate now. It is worth outlining that they still seem to be separate schools of practice with distinct individual aims. Apologetics is defense of the Church and her teachings, and evangelism is the gathering in of people into the Church. Yet they do seem to tread on each other's toes at times; evangelism without the ability to defend the faith is likely just an exercise in frustration, and apologetics that in

⁶³ See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 142. Justin's discourse with Trypho at the end of the dialogue is probably as bold-faced and example of this as one could ask for.

no way opens doors for potential conversion seems to be superficial and semantic in its focus. Gregory Baum and Pope Francis seem to articulate an effective middle-ground though, by bringing together the concepts of dialogue, which the apologetic argument must participate in, and the element of the Gospel's attractiveness via witness, which serves as the invitation to evangelization.

Baum in his reflective text *Amazing Church*, cites *Dialogue and Proclamation* as suggestive that "there are historical situations where the Church's mission does not include proclamation, but consists exclusively of dialogue, co-operation, and witness."⁶⁴ This description is reflective of the 'ought-to' aim of modern apologetics; it does not give ground or cede claims to the outside world, but exists as a genuine sharing of the position of the Church and the larger realities to which it points. Baum goes on to criticize the dialogue process which attempts to proselytize, saying that it "would instrumentalize dialogue and destroy its profound meaning."⁶⁵ Much like the end-goal of the second century apologists, dialogue seeks more to present the position of witness and demonstrate the legitimacy of the belief and practice which founds it, rather than a specific argument for conversion.

Francis on the other hand articulates the need and practice of evangelism in terms not dissimilar to the apologetic argument, but we must remember that evangelism has ultimately a different end than simply apologizing. Francis's goal is to provide a framework for a 'New Evangelization' to meet the needs of the world today; in many

⁶⁴ Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 118

⁶⁵ Baum, *Amazing Church*, 120.

ways this is not unlike the present thesis attempting to articulate an apologetic for the same reasons. The attractiveness which Francis preaches is one which is rooted in the invitation towards an experience of the love of God⁶⁶ and must be expressed via the practices of the institutional Church and by personal faith.⁶⁷

We may therefore suggest that the relationship and the distinction between apologetics and evangelism is in the desired telos of the witness. Apologetics in many ways acts as the vanguard for the faith, serving in the in-between space with the Church on one side and the secular on the other. It is in this space that the apologists might “kick-start the debate with Christianity in certain intellectual, academic circles... thereby provoking responses,”⁶⁸ in the words of Ulrich, or perhaps the words of Baum and suggest that it be a ‘witness’ to the deeper realities which undergird the faith. While there may be hope for conversion, as again we see at the end of Justin's *Dialogue*, conversion is not the intent of apologetic writing, whereas it is the core of evangelization.

The joining point for these two however seems to be the dialogue process. In much the same way as the apologetic works of the second century acted in preparatory ways, the engagement and articulation of witness is key in establishing a basis for evangelization. In deference to Baum we may also say that conversion in such dialogue is not the aim, but we may also suggest that it could be a hope in the end. Francis articulates

⁶⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, (Washington DC: USCCB, 2013), 20-21.

⁶⁷ It is frankly difficult to find a singular citation for these amidst the work of *Evangelli Gaudium*. If pressed, the entirety of the third chapter of the text is more or less built to address these needs, and works to weave together the interplay between the faith of the people and the institutions, sacraments, and leadership of the institutional Church.

⁶⁸ Jörg Ulrich, “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 30.

this in discussing the type of person-to person communion which must likewise serve as the bedrock of the apologetic argument. He states that:

In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God's word... but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship.⁶⁹

Francis is keen to reiterate as well the humility with which such dialogue needs to take place and the need for genuine listening and understanding between believers and non-believers, and with respect to the circumstances involved, saying "At times the message can be presented directly, at times by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation."⁷⁰ Both of these statements evoke in some ways the lessons and practices demonstrated by the second century apologists, but likewise tune them for the modern project of proclamation, while being sensitive to the times and places when it is and is not right.

We are then lead by Francis' words into the final aspect of the section as we interrogate the sources for evidence available to support the claims made by the Church. The second century demonstrates to us, and this works in tandem with the first argument of this section, that there is clear benefit in the ability to reference the prevailing culture accurately and pervasively. However, it is also important to note that the second century apologists did not simply make reference and leave it untouched or present it as incontrovertible evidence of a given claim. While versed in the philosophies and myths of

⁶⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (Washington DC: USCCB, 2013), 64-65.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

the day, they considered the argument of Christianity to be one which did not have the philosophical gaps which the Greek schools of thought did or the myths concerning the pantheon suggested. They offered a form of thinking which was cooperative with the culture but did not surrender to it, instead suggesting the improvements Christianity could bring to both the workaday and spiritual matters of life. It seems reasonably safe based on our analysis in chapter two, to say that the apologists did their utmost to rest their work within the context of the scriptural canon and the ecclesiastical teaching and tradition (to the extent that both of those existed in the early Church). When the two were not always compatible, it seems that the apologists sided with what they saw as Revelation, rather than with the prevailing wisdom of the day; we could argue this exists even in Athenagoras' text, and that while he is perhaps the most enthusiastic about relating the two, his aim in the end is the defense of the faith and revelation of the Christian Church. In setting their foundation in this manner, they were able to articulate themselves in their culture and with their culture, but without giving away that which Wills has called essential to the Church.

It is here that we must be exceptionally careful and where the modern landmines threaten the situation of the Church. MacIntyre's arguments challenge the ability for the modern Church to behave in this manner because the ethos governing the Church has a telos, and even in the second century we could see a culture which assumed a kind of telos, even if the ends were pluralistic. In short, we must acknowledge that the world of the second century Christianity and prevailing Greek philosophical thought at least both had the fundamental language of teleology to speak in, whereas in the present day, MacIntyre suggests no such common ground. MacIntyre's concern is that the self-

presentation of the Church becomes problematic if not impossible in the present owing to what he perceives as a lacking in this area, or at least the inability to presume that any given individual would accept the notion of a teleological end. In grappling with this aspect of the culture, the Church risks sliding into such a state wherein it has to give up essentials in order to disseminate its message in the terms of the wider secular culture.

However, the direction the apologists bring us in I think suggests that with care and precision it is ultimately possible to refute MacIntyre's concerns. The cooperation exists via the notions of hybridity and mutual social action previously articulated in this chapter. The Church in many ways has common cause with numerous secular organizations, and through these connections is perhaps best able to speak invitationally, supported by hybrid apologists who are then able to contextualize the action of the Church, refusing the potential of Smith and Denton's worry of the Church existing as another self/community assistance organization. The Kantian ethos might attempt to reduce the Church acting in this way to such a phenomenon, but in the process of social action coupled with dialogue and genuine witness, the Church portrays the attractiveness Francis calls upon it to show.

The refutation of Kant seems to go further by establishing mutual experience via social action as a baseline to which all involved can return in the course of the dialogue and which allows for further interrogation of the experience. It also serves, in a way which might make the second century apologists proud, to cooperate with the prevailing culture of individual conscience rather than to attempt a Sisyphean task of dismantling it in favor of an ethos more amenable to the history of the Church. The rational agent is participant-in rather than external-to the apology framed in this manner, and the

significance of the experience of cooperating with the Church (whether institutional or constituent) is noteworthy here. It is cooperative with the perception of Christianity while also allowing the opportunity for a greater literacy to develop regarding of what is meant by the use of Christian terminology or Christian use of external terminology; the foundation for this rests upon an underpinning cooperative action.

Cooperative action paired with apologetic dialogue is also reflective of one of the greater strengths of Christianity throughout its history. Beck's treatment of the early Church in chapter one⁷¹ pointed out that part of Christianity's success developed out of its ability to produce communal goods on a level and of a quality that its competitors could not. Muldoon makes a similar observation vis-à-vis modern Christianity, saying that the Church provides a kind of oasis of community in a world otherwise devotedly driven to a culture of the individual.⁷² The language of action and dialogue becomes a place which allows for Christians to bear witness to their faith in a way which belies and often works around a necessary understanding of the more complex theological underpinnings of such a given action. Athenagoras made a similar claim in the second century, stating "But among us you will find uneducated persons, and artisans and old women, who if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth."⁷³ Action allows for

⁷¹ Roger Beck, "The Religious Market of the Roman Empire: Rodney Stark and Christianity's Pagan Competition" in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, ed. Leif Vaage (Wilfred Laurier University Press: 2006), 237.

⁷² Muldoon, 49-50. I would point particularly towards Muldoon's phrase "[Isolated practitioners of faith] need the discomfort of having to deal with other people." as evocative of the above sentiment.

⁷³ Athenagoras, *Plea For Christians*, found in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, Vol. II Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, ed. James Donaldson and Rev. Alexander Roberts. trans. Rev. Marcus Dods, Rev. B. P. Pratten, and Rev. George Reith. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874), Ch. 11.

the common ground wherein literacy is not a prerequisite, and develops the common ground from which the deeper apologetic arguments may stem.

However, by taking on the example of the second century apologists in this manner, that is to say via hybridity and demonstrating that Christianity can be shown to be a cooperative element with its culture, doing so should not declaw Christianity and remove the radical nature of what ultimately rests at the heart of it. In this method, reason is never given unbridled reign in apologetic arguments, but is instead servant to faith in the Divine Revelation of Scripture and Church Tradition. While this may be a sticking point for the pure rationalist, it still leaves the door wide open for genuine interaction between a modern individual and the life of the Church. And in some ways as a placation of MacIntyre and Harnack, this approach still keeps the Truth of the Church intact, while allowing it, as Francis says, an “awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp.”⁷⁴ The second century lesson here should be well remembered: The Gospel serves as the inspiration still for the apologetic mission, and must be the central point around which the whole thing turns.

We may then conclude this chapter having considered the ways in which the second century apologists can inform the modern context. Indeed, it is really only under their tutelage that this thesis is able to make the claims that it does, and an attempt to understand these conclusions outside of using the apologists as a hermeneutical lens would be on admittedly shaky ground. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, these figures also seem to be an abundant resource of advice for the modern apologetic effort

⁷⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (Washington DC: USCCB, 2013), 65.

as well, and an apologetic plan rooted in their lessons could be a valuable tool in the kit of modern apologetic discourse.

Certainly the application of their example is not entirely without some challenges. The preceding sections of this chapter identified areas of difficulty for the apologetic fathers, where their voices and methods and theology may not translate favorable into a modern context. The transition to a secular society and the lack of a singular target for apologies seem paramount among these challenges. However, by investigating these areas of difficulty we have subsequently found areas where the direction laid out by the apologists would serve the modern context well. Most prominently, I would argue, we have seen that the climate extant in the modern world can benefit from the second century apologists' focus on speaking to the theologically illiterate and to those whose fundamental assumptions are not the same as those of Christianity.

In addressing this concern we have seen the second century apologists' work to develop a common language and act as go-betweens for the culture and the religion. The apologists also utilized the social tools around them to argue for the legitimacy of the Christian faith; the second century leaned heavily on Roman respect for antiquity and philosophical thought and this thesis has shown that social action focused on social justice and cooperation with individual action could and should be considered comparable legitimizing elements in the present day. This concept also dovetails with the apologists ability to treat with and utilize the public perception of Christians; the second century concern stemmed from the various libels and rumors surrounding the new faith and in the present day seems to stem from reactions to (perceived or real) hypocrisies in what the Church does versus what it teaches.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly and contentiously, the apologists indicate the need and ability to ultimately, despite all the ‘accidental’ concessions to the culture they are attempting to address, the apologists seem to do their utmost to root their arguments in the scriptures and (burgeoning) tradition of the Church as it existed at the time. Their focal point remained Divine revelation over and against giving away the store to placate those on the outside. The work of this thesis comes to the conclusion that the methods and examples left by the apologetic fathers of the second century still have a great deal of advice to offer the efforts of the modern Church and modern apologist concerning these areas and we would be wise to consider then the best implementations for how these elements of rhetoric and methodology might look in a modern context.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to engage with the extent to which the second century apologists can inform the needs of the present day. This question has been investigated in the interest of furthering the modern apologetic discourse and discerning ways in which the modern context might be aided by figures and writings from within the Church's extensive Tradition. It is ultimately the conclusion of this thesis that, while there are some areas that the second century apologists have difficulty navigating, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Athenagoras still serve as figures of significant wisdom for the present day their example provides a useful catalogue of apologetic methods and insights for the modern apologist.

In setting up the means for these figures to be brought forward into a modern context, we first analyzed the extent to which their original second century context mirrored our own. Our analysis presented us with noteworthy areas of similarity worth investigation, such as the general suspicion of Christianity, a culture of religious pluralism with some degree of permeability for outsiders, a public space governed by entry requirements unamenable to the Church, and a somewhat entrenched form of civic religion which demands priority over any additional beliefs or traditions a person may wish to also participate in. However, noteworthy differences also emerged in the form of a definitive separation of the religious from the secular, as well as in the general locus of power and authority in the modern age shifting into the individual conscience. These aspects of modern society were elements the second century apologists did not really have to consider in writing their apologies, and which occasionally problematize any attempt to bring their work forward as this thesis has labored to do.

In examining the specific aspects of the second century apologetic argument, we found a number of key concerns and tactics running throughout the works of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Athenagoras. First and foremost, we identified in the apologists an effort in their apologies to make use of the cultural norms of their day; this created various apologetic arguments which argued that Christians possessed a common ethnicity and were the inheritors of an ancient tradition. It also continued into forms of apology which at times aligned Christianity with respectable figures from the Greco-Roman culture and at other times places a considerable degree of distance between the new religion and those same figures. Additionally, the apologists also attempted to walk a fine line between establishing Christians as good and loyal citizens, but also defended Christian refusal to oblige Roman orders which conflicted with their faith. Finally, the second chapter also followed the philosophical strands of the apologetic arguments and came to the conclusion that even when the apologists attempted to resist certain elements of the ambient philosophy of its day, they still voiced their rebellion in terms that operated within the parameters set by those philosophies.

The third and final chapter of this thesis investigated and spelled out the areas and the extent to which the apologetic tools and styles of the second century could inform the present. While navigating the changes in terrain between the second century and the present, it was demonstrated that the apologists were able to outline a course of action based upon their writings and the circumstances of modernity. The works of the second century apologists seem to recommend an active engagement with the modern world on terms that it can understand; the common language for this method seems to be at first social action directed towards the common good, followed by dialogue and education

which explores the theological underpinnings of Christian social action. This approach takes into account the second century apologists' keenness to appeal to their audience in mutually intelligible language, as well as the concerns of some within the tradition that in trying to engage in this manner, the Church is risking contamination by outside sources. The methods of the second century apologists attempt to walk that line by ensuring the centrality of the Gospel in their language, while at the same time conforming that language to whatever the norms of the day happen to be.

These conclusions, which again have been informed by the writings of Justin, Tertullian and Athenagoras, serve to define for the Church at present a tenable option in the field of apologetics. While perhaps the varying voices and contributions within it preclude any title such as a Justinian Option or Tertullian Option, my opinion is that it attempts to find a middle ground between the options put forward by MacIntyre and Pecknold. Whereas the Benedict Option risks a cloistering movement, and where the Dominic Option risks almost a kind of dilution, I think that the Second Century Option marries the concerns of both in a satisfactory way. Its intellectual focus on the centrality of the Gospel and the Tradition of the Church helps to defend it against wanton external influence, whereas its demands of social action as an invitational starting point demands an engaged approach which goes out into the world. The internal polemic nature of the Second Century Option helps to serve as a regulatory check and balance within the system itself. Undeniably, this approach only works under the guidance and the instruction of the second century apologists, but I also think that the wisdom of these figures and their demonstrated relatability to the modern context is sufficient and credible enough of a foundation.

Admittedly, as with a great deal of scholarship, there are aspects merely touched upon in this thesis which are fruitful areas of research in their own right. Perhaps one of the most significant areas for future study is rooted in the differences between the modern age and the early Church. Future study should investigate further areas where Church has potentially carried forward unhelpful apologetic tools. It was demonstrated in chapter three that some of the apologetic methods used by the second century fathers are ones which would prove to be at least unhelpful in a modern context if not actively counterproductive; from this suggestion I do not think it at all unreasonable to surmise that there are a few elements of the Church's apologetic discourse which are no longer able to reach the hearts and minds of those who hear them, and an investigation of whether or not this is the case would prove to be a useful piece of information.

Likewise it would be worth investigating if apology is a dialect spoken only by those who consider themselves the underdogs, or as we have used the term previously, somehow subaltern. This thesis portrayed both the ancient and modern Church as figures of some kind of subalternity in their respective cultures, and highlighted the ways in which that social standing would necessarily have to affect the apologetic argument. But it is worth asking the question if apology is only relegated to a real or a self-imagined sense of being the one under attack or otherwise some kind of lesser figure in the grand context of things.

Finally I might suggest that one of the areas entirely untouched by this thesis is apology to heretics, or what we might perhaps more generously call ecumenical apology. While perhaps another corollary of individual conscience dictating religious action, we live in a world of numerous faiths and numerous denominations within those faiths.

While the likes of those such as Tertullian and Augustine wrote prolifically against heretical sects, it would seem unconscionable for such a thing to happen today; certainly there would be an uproar or at least bafflement if a Catholic bishop denounced a Protestant minister on the grounds of heresy or vice versa. It could certainly be worth an examination in much the same vein as the present thesis to see if the apologetic rhetoric of the second century qua heretical sects has any insight to offer at all on ecumenism and interfaith relations in the present day, to say nothing of its ability to inform the Church against schools of modern heresy rooted in economic doctrines, ethical doctrines, or defections of thought that run counter to the Gospel.

One of the great riches of the Church is its heritage and its Tradition. Pecknold and MacIntyre's appeal to the titular saints of the Benedict and Dominic Options underscores the significance of looking within these riches to find solutions and methodologies appropriate to current day issues. Pope Francis' choice of his papal name is similarly participant in this process, calling back to the labors and ministry of St. Francis of Assisi as an example to be ever before his eyes. The great precedent within the Catholic Church of utilizing various aspects of the Tradition to navigate through difficult challenges also undergirds the work undertaken by this thesis. The writers of the second century lived and worked within one of the most tenuous and difficult periods in the history of the Church, and yet their legacy and their attempt to address the problems of their time can still today serve as an example of an apology focused simultaneously on defending the radical message of Jesus while engaging the world in a manner reflective of a genuine acceptance of Christ's message.

Bibliography

- Anders-Christian Jacobsen, "Athenagoras" in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*. Edited by David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014.
- Athenagoras. *A Plea for Christians in Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, Vol. II Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*. Edited by James Donaldson and Rev. Alexander Roberts. Translated by Rev. Marcus Dods, Rev. B. P. Pratten, and Rev. George Reith. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874.
- Athenagoras, "Embassy for Christians" in *Ancient Christian Writers*. Edited by Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe. Translated by Joseph Hugh Crehan, S.J. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1956.
- Baum, Gregory. "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec," in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America*. Edited by David Lyon and Marguerite van Die, 149-165. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Baum, Gregory. *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Beck, Roger "The Religious Market of the Roman Empire: Rodney Stark and Christianity's Pagan Competition" in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, edited by Leif Vaage , 233-252. Toronto: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006.
- Berger, Peter. "Secularization Falsified." *First Things*, Feb 2008, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/02/002-secularization-falsified>.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge Classics. 2004.
- Celsus, *On True Doctrine: A Discourse Against Christians*. Translated by R. Joseph Hoffman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Charles, Ronald. *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014.
- Connor, Tracy. "Family Overjoyed by Pope Francis' Kiss for Disabled Son." *NBC News*, Published Sept. 29, 2015. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/pope-francis-visits-america/family-overjoyed-pope-francis-kiss-disabled-son-n434346>.

- De Vogel, C. J. "Problems Concerning Justin Martyr: Did Just Find a Certain Continuity between Greek Philosophy and Christian Faith?" *Mnemosyne* 31, no. 4 (1978), 360-388.
- Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. Translated by Roy J. Deferrari. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1953.
- Pope Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. Washington DC: USCCB Communications, 2013.
- Fredriksen, Paula. "Christians in the Roman Empire in the First Three Centuries C.E." In *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, edited by David S. Potter, 587-606. Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010.
- Frend, W.H. C., *The Early Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *A History of Christian Thought, Vol 1*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.
- Goodman, Martin. *Mission and Conversion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Guha, Ranajit and Gayatri Spivak. *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Habermas, Jürgen. "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *Habermas in the Public Sphere*. Edited by Craig Calhoun, 421-457. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1966.
- Hannon, Michael W. "The Dominic Option." *First Things*. Published Jul 15, 2013. Accessed Dec 10, 2015. <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/first-thoughts/2013/07/the-dominic-option>.
- Harrison, Thomas. "Ancient and Modern Imperialism." *Greece and Rome* 55, no. 1 (2008): 1-22.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in *The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1-14. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 1983.
- Hubbard, Amy. "Boy Takes Stage with Pope Francis, Hugs Him, Won't Leave." *Los Angeles Times*, Published Oct. 30, 2013, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-sh-boy-stage-pope-francis-20131030-story.html>.
- Justin Martyr. *I Apology*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948.

- Justin Martyr. *2 Apology*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948.
- Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948.
- Karimi, Faith. "Pope Francis' Embrace of a Severely Disfigured Man Touches World." *CNN*, Published Nov. 7, 2013. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/07/world/europe/pope-francis-embrace>.
- Kelly, Mark. "Unchurched Americans Turned off by Church, Open to Christians." *LifeWay*, Jan 9, 2008, Accessed July 5, 2016. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/LifeWay-Research-finds-unchurched-Americans-turned-off-by-church-open-to-Christians>.
- Keys, Scott. "Pope Francis Sneaks out of the Vatican at Night to Feed the Homeless." *Think Progress*, Published Dec. 3, 2013. <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/12/03/3011421/pope-francis-homeless>.
- Levente, Pap. "Stoic Virtues in Tertullian's Works and Their Relation to Cicero," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica* 6, no. 1 (Dec, 2014), 7-16.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Screwtape Letters*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins. 2001.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue, 3rd Edition*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000, 109.
- Messori, Vittorio. *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985.
- Mitchell, Terence R. and Leigh Thompson. "A theory of temporal adjustments of the evaluation of events: Rosy Prospection & Rosy Retrospection" in *Advances in Managerial Cognition and Organizational Information-Processing* edited by Chuck Stubbart, James R. Meindl and Joseph Francis Allen Porac, 85-114. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. 1994.
- Muldoon, Tim. *Seeds of Hope: Young Adults and the Catholic Church in the United States*. New York: Paulist Press, 2008.
- Norman, Donald A. "THE WAY I SEE IT: Memory Is More Important than Actuality." *Interactions* 16, no. 2 (2009): 24-26.

- Osborn, Eric "The Subtlety of Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, no. 4 (Nov, 1998), 361-370.
- Pecknold, C.C. "The Dominican Option." *First Things*. Published Oct 6, 2014. Accessed Dec 10, 2015. <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/10/the-dominican-option>
- Placher, William. *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983.
- Polybius. *Histories*. Translated by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. New York: Macmillan. 1889 http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/polybius_six.pdf
- Rowe, William V. "Adolf von Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization" in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, edited by Wendy E. Hellenman, 69-98. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994.
- Shah, Timothy. "Making the World Safe For Liberalism: From Grotius to Rawls." *The Political Quarterly*, Vol.71 (2000): 121-139., accessed April 3, 2016, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=8f32c5d3-24b3-4ff0-bcd5-34df392bfe5a%40sessionmgr4004&vid=1&hid=4206>.
- Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. Edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Taylor, Charles. "The Meaning of Secularism." *The Hedgehog Review* Vol 12, no. 3, 23-34. Accessed April 4, 2016. http://iascculture.org/THR/THR_article_2010_Fall_Taylor.php.
- Tertullian. *Apology*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948.

Thiessen, Joel and Lorne L. Dawson, "Is there a Renaissance of Religion in Canada? A Critical Look at Bibby and Beyond" in *Religion and Canadian Society, 2nd Edition*. Edited by Lori G. Beaman, 84-103. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, Inc. 2012.

Ulrich, Jörg. "Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century." in *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity: In Defence of Christianity*. Edited by David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich, 1-32. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014.

Vaage, Leif. "Why Christianity Succeeded (in) the Roman Empire" in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*. Edited by Leif Vaage, 253-278. Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.

Vermurlen, Brad. "Perceptions of and Objections to Christianity among Unchurched and Dechurched Adults." *Review of Religious Research* 57, no. 1 (2015): 161-62.

Von Harnack, Adolf. *History of Dogma Vol. 1*. Translated by Neil Buchanan. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895.

Whitelam, Keith W. *The Invention of Ancient Israel*. London: Routledge Press, 1996.

Wills, Gary. *Why I am a Catholic*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2002.