



THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF APOLOGETICS COURSES IN CHRISTIAN COLLEGES: THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CHALLENGES FROM MARC BLOCH (1886-1944)

History and Philosophy in Education

Abstract

The paper is an examination on the history and future of apologetics courses in Christian colleges, with an argument that such courses are either collapsing or being redesigned, but that the better educational philosophy would be in the teaching of reasons for faith -- that is, such 'apologetic' sources -- be returned back into the larger disciplinary and open discourses of history, sociology, philosophy, and theology proper.

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The History and Future of Apologetics Courses in Christian colleges: The Historiographical Challenges from Marc Bloch (1886-1944).

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INTRODUCTION

The paper is an examination on the history and future of apologetics courses in Christian colleges, with an argument that such courses are either collapsing or being redesigned, but that the better educational philosophy would be in the teaching of reasons for faith -- that is, such 'apologetic' sources -- be returned back into the larger disciplinary and open discourses of history, sociology, philosophy, and theology proper. In 1981 Vernon Bates put forth the argument that "... Christian apologetics are treated as legitimating formulas designed to ward off threats to one's universe." Forty years later, the truth of the formulation-type mindset, and its demise, is apparent with an article from *The Washington Post* on the new American house speaker, Mike Johnson's, plan to establish a Christian law school (Kranish and Stanley-Becker 2023). Johnson had begun a feasibility study for a Christian Law School in 2010. It would have been known as Louisiana Christian University, and its parent school was Louisiana College, a private Southern Baptist college in Pineville. It is claimed that \$5 million to buy and renovate the project headquarters, among other expenses.

The feasibility study was said to be a "hodgepodge collection of papers." This is what American evangelical apologetics looks like: high on talk of American enterprise, low on the education and application of intellectual history and sociology. The scheme's failure was inevitable when you compare the evangelical apologetic planning to the well-established history of Law School of Catholic Universities. Schools of Catholic apologetics do exist but Catholic academia keeps such schools at great distance to the traditional schools of the humanities and social science, and particularly including Law. Apologetics is different to doing legal defence cases, for the very reason that worldviews of belief involve judgements which is not weighted on the Law. This is the Kantian tradition (Kant 1790) which has kept scholarly Protestant worldviews continuing in the times of hype-modernism and postmodernism. Kant talked about moral law but introduced a new transcendentalism, different to Plato. Moral law were metaphysical principles, but application would always be skewed in practical reason. The Dutch Reformed tradition, to which American evangelical scholarship, is largely based, was marginally influenced from Kant's schema, but placed heavier reliance in the concept of God's law. From the mid-century, there has been no consensus in American evangelical scholarship, between the model of Immanuel Kant, a pietist, and the model of Abraham Kuyper, a neo-Calvinist. In politics, the former separated most clearly the roles of Church and State, and for the pietist communities they were not of the world. The Calvinist model had always separated roles, but Calvinism privileges the Church above the State in the formal, establishment, roles. The pietist acts out privilege in folkly separatism, which connects pietism to political radicalism.

Schooling and Apologetics

In considering apologetics, there are various schools of religious thought, Modernism, Neo-orthodoxy, Neo-evangelicism, Evangelicism, and Fundamentalism, are as examples of attempts to develop “viable apologetics or legitimating formulas” (Bates 1981). This is the same argument of Buch's American Revivalist Tradition (ART) thesis (1995). Frameworks in Christian philosophy of education is critically considered, and the ART way of thinking is not only contained within the boundaries of the United States. The author's doctorate (Buch 1995) has demonstrated that that the way of thinking has been present in Australasia for more than half-century, and American schools of evangelicalism are well-established in Australia and New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea, and Polynesia.

21st Century Criticism of Apologetics

Although there is a current re-think on Christian Apologetics for the 21st Century (Sudduth 2003, Penner 2013, Siniscalchi 2013, Stackhouse 2014, Smith 2023), much of the thinking still pertains to the early 20th century debates and outlooks. For the past decade “The End of Apologetics” has been herald among evangelical communities (Penner 2013; Siniscalchi 2018). The end is conveyed as the continuation of “Christian Witness”, pietistic opportunity for personal testimony, avoiding what is perceived as the intellectual pitfalls of apologetics. Ted A. Smith (2023) denotes the wider context as “The End of Theological Education,” which comes as the phoenix fire and resurrection. Smith is speaking in a different context in the decline of theological enrolments, but it illustrates the difference between theology as a knowledge discipline and college-level apologetics courses. Apologetics is a technology of rhetorical defence; it does not have the comprehensive examinations that a Bachelor of Theology course is expected to have. Smith's problem with the decline of theological education is that a majority of potential enrolments would be happier with a lighter apologetics and ministry program than the rigours of theology, or a studies-in-religion, degree.

Part of the problem is confusion about the role of the Reformed Tradition and negative or positive apologetics, to which Michael Sudduth (2003: 299–321) had untangled. According to Sudduth, Reformed epistemologists have criticisms of both particular versions of natural theology and positive apologetics “that can constructively shape future approaches to the apologetic employment of natural theology and Christian evidence.” However, Sudduth's argument is merely about which is the sharpest tool in the shed, and how to use it. The big picture on Christian worldview is lost in such an argument. In the meantime, John Stackhouse Jr. (2014) has taken the American Neo-Evangelical Tradition further into the sphere of existentialism, and following the pietists, Christian Epistemology becomes a matter of articulating the believer's passionate and personal vocation; as in Luther's *Here I Stand*. What is too overlooked by Stackhouse and the evangelical apologists who follow his approach, is the disjunction between existential mindset and the concept of apologetics. The existential character is the person who does not defend herself or his self. The person simply chooses, and the rationality of existentialism is the legitimacy to make such a decision. The only

sociology for existentialism is to affirm, for everyone, the capacity of such freedom, or slavery or alienation in not making clear choices to live, in the absurdity or not. If it has positive apologetic characteristics, then existentialism is an affirmation for living in one constructed meaning.

MARC BLOCH (1886-1944) AND THE WAY TO RE-READ HISTORY AND EDUCATION

Marc Bloch was a historiographer whose work on the historian's craft (1954, 1992) pointed out the problems in apologetic thinking for history teaching and learning. Since William Lane Craig's work (1984, 2008) on rethinking Christian Apologetics, teachers have misunderstood the semantics from critics such as James Fodor (2018), which are precisely clarified in Bloch. The misunderstanding comes largely from the difficulties in comparative histories (Sewell 1967, Hill 1980).

The famous *Annales* School and the French historiographical trend in the *longue duree*, was the work led by Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel, and had taken a long-term approach identifying larger social structures, as opposed to local events. Good historiography does not allow local details to wander aimless but finds “the fit” in the social structure. Christian apologetics rides heavily on the origins of local details. That is assumed to be good, empirical, history process but Bloch challenged this thinking (originally France 1940-1, English translation 1954, 1992 Peter Burke's translation: 24-9):

It will never be amiss to begin with an acknowledgment of our faults. The explanation of the very recent in terms of the remotest past, naturally attractive to men who have made of this past their chief subject of research, has sometimes dominated our studies to the point of a hypnosis. In its most characteristic aspect, this idol of the historian tribe may be called the obsession with origins. Moreover, in the development of historical thought, it has enjoyed its moment of particular favor. It was Renan, I believe, who once wrote (I quote from memory, therefore, I fear, inexactly): “In all human affairs, it is the origins which deserve study before everything else.” And, before him, Sainte-Beuve: “With curiosity, I scrutinize and make note of all beginnings. “ The idea is entirely typical of their age. So also is the word “origins.” Shortly after *The Origins of Christianity* came *The Origins of Contemporary France*. Not to mention mere followers. However, the word “origins” is disturbing, because it is ambiguous. (24)

...

Now, this preoccupation with origins, justifiable in a certain type of religious analysis, has spread in a doubtlessly inevitable contagion into other fields of research where its legitimacy is far more debatable. Moreover, history oriented towards origins was put to the service of value judgments. What else did Taine intend, in tracing the "origins" of the France of his day, but a denunciation of the political ill consequences of what he

considered a false philosophy of man? And whether the subject was the Germanic invasions or the Norman conquest of England, the past was so assiduously used as an explanation of the present only in order that the present might be the better justified or condemned. So in many cases the demon of origins has been, perhaps, only the incarnation of that other satanic enemy of true history: the mania for making judgments. (26)

But let us return to our Christian studies. It is one thing for a troubled and self-searching conscience to determine its attitude toward the Catholic religion by some such code as is daily laid down in our churches; it is quite another for the historian to explain present-day Catholicism as an observed fact. A knowledge of their beginnings is indispensable to understand, but insufficient to account for, the actual religious phenomena. To simplify our problem, we must postpone the question as to how far the creed, identical in name, is the same in substance. Even assuming our religious tradition entirely unchanging, we must find reasons for its preservation. Human reasons, that is, for the assumption of divine intervention would be unscientific. In a word, the question is no longer whether Jesus was first crucified and then resurrected, but how it came to pass that so many fellow humans today believe in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Now, wherever fidelity to a belief is to be found, all evidences agree that it is but one aspect of the general life of a group. It is like a knot in which are intertwined a host of divergent characteristics of the structure and mentality of a society. In short, a religious creed involves the whole problem of the human environment. Great oaks from little acorns grow. But only if they meet favorable conditions of soil and climate, conditions which are entirely beyond the scope of embryology. (26-7)

In summary points for understanding why Christian apologetics does not stand historiographically, according to Bloch:

- An obsession with origins is an intellectual idol;
- There is ambiguity in the concept of 'origins': reference to beginnings or causes?
- For most historical realities the very notion of a starting-point remains singularly elusive;
- A defence of religion can be purely existential but if it is defended as a historical religion, it cannot be justifiable in an existential type of religious analysis;
- History oriented towards origins by Apologetics is put to the service of value judgments
- "A knowledge of their beginnings [of Catholic beliefs] is indispensable to understand, but insufficient to account for, the actual religious phenomena";
- The danger of confusing ancestry with explanation;

The final conclusion is that the “Christian Apologetic” is nothing more than of a dominion theory, which is a majority thinking of American evangelical believers (i.e., right-wing and where the American left-wing evangelical positioning is the minority).

The recent attempted revival of apologetics has struggled to make headway in today’s climate of the cultural-history war. The attempted headway is considered to be third edition of *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* by William Lane Craig (1984, 2008 Third Edition). For those familiar with the American apologetics industry of the last half century, there is nothing substantive new. Craig had created a name for himself by using apologetics in the spectacular of the debate event, creating the public relations image of heavy-weights battling out over worldview belief. On paper it is a different matter. Australian James Fodor’s work, *Unreasonable Faith: How William Lane Craig Overstates the Case for Christianity*, (2018) set the disciplinary knowledge against Craig’s apologetic technology and reveals the hollowness of the rhetoric.

The Defeat in the Blochian Critique for Apologetics

There is, though, a forgetfulness of the history and that the Blochian Critique for Apologetics had been around some time. In 1967 William Sewell set out Marc Bloch’s “Logic of Comparative History, History and Theory”, as follows (208-9):

Bloch's espousal of the comparative method is a counterpart of his belief that history cannot be intelligible unless it can “succeed in establishing explanatory relationships between phenomena.” The comparative method is essentially a tool for dealing with problems of explanation. Although Bloch uses the comparative method for a number of distinct purposes and in different contexts, a single logic - a logic which Bloch himself never explicitly states -underlies these various uses. This is the logic of hypothesis testing. If an historian attributes the appearance of phenomenon A in one society to the existence of condition B, he can check this hypothesis by trying to find other societies where A occurs without B or vice versa. If he finds no cases which contradict the hypothesis, his confidence in its validity will increase, the level of his confidence depending upon the number and variety of comparisons made. If he finds contradictory cases, he will either reject the hypothesis outright or reformulate and refine it so as to take into account the contradictory evidence and then subject it again to comparative testing. By such a process of testing, reformulating, and retesting, he will construct explanations which satisfy him as convincing and accurate. Whether employed by historians or by social scientists, the comparative method is an adaptation of experimental logic to investigations in which actual experimentation is

impossible. The comparative method, like the experimental method, is a means of systematically gathering evidence to test the validity of our explanations. (208-9)

Bloch realized that the comparative method could be used in this way to test explanatory hypotheses, but for him this was only one of three equally important uses; the comparative method could also be used to discover the uniqueness of different societies and to formulate problems for historical research. What Bloch never recognized was that these three uses of comparative method, while distinct in purpose, share a common logic, the logic of hypothesis testing. (209)

The comparative method, since the 1960s, has come under criticism, and this is seen in the critique of comparative religion where an 'apple' might be pass-off as a 'pear'. Furthermore, in many examinations, the number of required cases required are statistically insignificant, and this leads to the classical problem of induction. Nevertheless, Bloch's method points to a better understanding of different societies than the apologetic stance of defending the Christian society from the insider's perspective.

Alette Olin Hill and Boyd H. Hill, Jr. (1980) has a different reading to Sewell (1967) of Marc Bloch and Comparative History:

True comparison, he [Bloch] declared, entails "two widely different intellectual processes." Bloch derived these two processes, which we will call 'universal' and 'historical,' from the French linguist Antoine Meillet (1866-1936). In 'The Definition of the Comparative Method,' Meillet wrote, "There are two different ways of practicing comparison: one can compare in order to draw from comparison either universal laws or historical information. These two types of comparison, equally legitimate," he claimed, "differ absolutely." (829)

Apologetics tend to follow the universal process, without the understanding of the fit of historical information to the universal schemas.

Application of Blochian Historiography for PE620: Christian Apologetics, Malyon College

This paper arises from a dialogue with Dave Benson, an apologist at The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, and a critical examination of PE620: Christian Apologetics, Master of Divinity, Master of Ministry and Related Programs, Malyon College, Australian College of Theology. The interaction brings together, globally, a reimagining of educational philosophies and pedagogies in transformational times (Buch 2023).

In downloaded Benson course outlines¹, the following critical review was put together of “PE620: Christian Apologetics, Master of Divinity, Master of Ministry and Related Programs, Malyon College, Australian College of Theology (2017)”:

1. On the issues as aims of the course: “What intellectual **attacks** has Christianity received and what were the responses?” The word ‘attack’ is immediately defensively militant;
2. PE420.620_Module01_IntroductionToApologetics-9: “a narrative approach to apologetics.” Apologetics, conceptually, is essentially non-narrative. Yes, have the “big story’ God has revealed in Scripture”, but that is necessarily theology proper;
 - a. a broad framework of apologetic verificationism ought to be honestly considered in the wider discussions of philosophy (epistemology). The critical question I would honestly and openly ask is that, where is the fuller philosophical situating in “defending and commending the plausibility, credibility and relevance of Christian theism and following Christ in particular.” My offer as an alternative would be a philosophical position as evangelical belief, and that would be open to the critiques of Alvin Plantinga’s nuanced arguments.
 - b. References to popular ABC Religion & Ethics articles by Alister McGrath, John Milbank, and Michael Jensen, illustrates the entanglement between the apologetics and theology proper. For example, on the basis of the apologetics, evangelical believers would too easily dismiss Amos Yong’s arguments (2010) of *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company). This is what I mean in having the cake of personal beliefs generated in the apologetics and eating the cake in the proper theology of evangelical belief, as in Yong’s work;
 - c. “an apologia was a personal witness that brought transcendent conviction and revelation from beyond to reframe and challenge the dominant cultural narrative which excluded wisdom. It involves a ‘full narration’ of one’s confession of faith: ‘Apology as narrative, argument, confession and imaginative witness by the human person in the name of the divine personality against the hitherto impersonality of the city—that is the very heart of Christian theology’ (Milbank 1993, 2012, xvi; Sargent 2012).” I disagree with the Milbank definition, as I disagree with Milbank’s radical orthodoxy, of which Yong alludes to several problems. Hence, we have a problem of the bubble thinking in the apologetics industry. My offer as an alternative would be a

¹ Except “Module 12: Worldviews 3” – the link did not work on that occasion but, in this case, the slides were downloaded.

- philosophical position as evangelical belief, which is open to the critiques of orthodoxy, as in Dominic Erdozain's (2016) *The Soul of Doubt: the Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx* (Oxford University Press), and as in John B. Henderson's (1998) *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Hersey* (State University of New York Press);
- d. Etymologically, yes, may mean "[a]polege in in Greek means 'to tell fully' and therefore simply to narrate, with a fullness that is acquired from a slightly detached perspective, as indicated by the prefix apo' meaning 'away from', 'off', or 'standing apart',..." but that is a poor approach historically. It is clear that 20th century apologetics became defensive and militant. The etymologically might be a correction, but where in the new testament does the word, '[a]polege', appear – an honest enquiry, I do not know the answer and just suggesting that it would be a necessary discussion;
 - e. PE420.620_Module02_ApologeticsHistoryTypesMethod-2: My previous point above on the language, but specially terms: "Review the intellectual **attacks** upon Christian faith and Christian responses, including the Apologists, Augustine, Aquinas, the Enlightenment, Darwinism, and **secular humanism**." This framing is bubble thinking, which fails to reach out in engagement to the many other critiques from humanism, ancient, renaissance and modern.
 - f. I have already mentioned the problem with Graham (2013). My critique of Elaine Graham's abuse of Habermas (recent email), and Wayne Hudson agrees, pointing out to me that the Americans generally and grossly misunderstood the European Habermas;
 - g. I will have to get to Avery Dulles' *A History of Apologetics* (2005). But I have examined already his (1988) *Models of the church* (2nd ed., Dublin: Gill and Macmillan) and formulated a critique of his Catholic ecclesiology;
 - h. This is my main critique of apologetics: it is **not**: "Apologetics involves interpersonal dialogue and so the strategy pursued must vary by time and place." I am sure your personal theology is interpersonal dialogue, but this mixed up and entangled field of apologetics is not. The personalism is read in bubble thinking;
3. PE420.620_Module03_Apologetics-Foundations-Fundamentals-of-Faith: the course appears limited to foundational epistemology. Is there an honest look at various non-foundational epistemology which does not fit with apologetics?
 - a. The more I dig deeper into the original concept of *Weltanschauung* of Hegel and Dilthey, and other early 20th-century thinkers, including 'Christians' like William James, the more I see the abuse in representation of the thinking of *Weltanschauung* in modern Christian apologetics; it is not meant as a model of bubble thinking;

4. PE420.620_Module04_PhilosophicalChallenges1: Much of what I am asking is whether we have gone beyond the shallow debates of “contemporary philosophical challenges to Christian belief posed by deism, atheism, science, miracles, and evolution” (on both sides of the binaries). How *philosophical* are these debates? As I said, for those outside of the academic world, I have to explain the existence of phony debates. The Theism-Atheism debates are mostly phony debates from both sides. The participants cannot fully read – history and sociology – their opposition within their own particular bubble thinking (from both sides). If they could, the realisation would happen that debates are no good, and open and *communicative rationality* (Habermas 1991-2010 listed) is the only answer;
 - a. Isn’t “Assess critiques of Christianity from a Christian perspective” bubble thinking? My offer as an alternative would be a philosophical position as evangelical belief, is to assess critiques of Christianity from all perspectives, at least how philosophy identifies a host of ideologies;
 - b. “2. SCIENCE & GOD: DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP”. Is that not a conceptually an uneven approach? Should science not be compared to other fields of learning?
 - c. “2.1 Has Science Buried God?” Right, think about proper theology! Is that even a proper question? In philosophy, we call it a straw man argument;
5. PE420.620_Module05_PhilosophicalChallenges2: Again, the entanglement. Running ‘postmodernism, violence, suffering and evil’ together invites a hosts of criticisms of the apologetic approach here; I am sure you will agree, given we agree on the entanglement of postmodernism, and I am suggesting that it can only be done in philosophy proper; my point is wonderfully illustrated in the title: “3.1 A *Potted* History of Postmodernity: Pursuing Truth *and* Freedom”;
6. PE420.620_Module06_HistoricalChallenges1: “2. BIG STORY ‘CAUGHT OUT’ RESPONSES +” speaks to apprehension if not fear. If you do not want to be caught out, do biblical criticism as scriptural criticism, as you do as a New Testament scholar, not as apologetics which is too much layering the bible scholarship with evangelical framings; that is my point in referring to Professor Timothy Larsen of Wheaton College’s comments, on last Saturday (20 May 2023) at the 2023 EHA Conference (see <https://drnevillebuch.com/revelatory-and-recovery-moments-assessing-lifes-journeys-and-directions/>);
7. PE420.620_Module07_HistoricalChallenges2: On psychological critiques emerging from behaviourism and Freudianism, I am probably most in agreement with you but the analysis from you and other evangelical scholars do, does not go to major challenge I am making to evangelical historiography today:
 - i. (see <https://drnevillebuch.com/fuller-view-for-telling-the-story-of-australian-evangelical-history/>);

- b. "3. DIFFERENT APOLOGETIC APPROACHES TO COMMENDING JESUS". Really, is this proper theology? It sounds too much like a P.R. exercise ("hello, can I introduce you, my friend, Jesus, standing right beside me."). How would it not be received as a P.R. exercise outside of the bubble thinking?
 - i. Again, my offer as the evangelical alternative is the open and *communicative rationality* (Habermas 1991-2010 listed);
8. PE420.620_Module08_BehaviouralChallenges1: There are heavy and nuanced problems with your apologetics with:
 - a. 3.2.1 Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872)—Materialism and Religion as a Projection: Your association with ideology is only cheap shot.
 - i. Consider Wayne Hudson's quotation on Feuerbach which I placed in <https://drnevillebuch.com/revelatory-and-recovery-moments-assessing-lifes-journeys-and-directions/> ;
 - b. "3.5 Sections from "C.S. Lewis on Freud and Marx" by Art Lindsley": Really, when was C.S. Lewis the authority on Freud and Marx? In fiction you can make anything stick which might not be true; and Lewisian apologetics is weak philosophically, and I have said that before, as you may or may not recall;
 - c. "3.6 Francis Schaeffer Commenting on Skinner's 'Operant Conditioning'": Does not anyone in the evangelical world take my critique of the Schaefferian historiography seriously? And if so, why not? The absence of engagement I can only take as a response of bubble thinking (<https://drnevillebuch.com/the-language-and-ignorance-of-the-culture-warrior-and-knowledge-of-religion-culture-in-late-20th-century-queensland/>)
9. PE420.620_Module09_BehaviouralChallenges2: "Resource 9.1: Christ's Supremacy in a Pluralistic World", if that is the case, you need to talk each pluralist positioning on its own terms, and not as "engaging in dialogue with a person from a **non-Christian** worldview" in the "non-sense" term of 'non-Christian'. Indeed, you need to engage with me in the 'Post-Christian' positioning on its own terms;
 - a. Why do you ignore my critique, and from other's, of Haidt 2013 (see my paper, "Is Social Media to Blame for Academic Ruin");
 - b. I read your fair comment: "Granted, there is a danger that my strident critiques of contemporary sociology will justify evangelical anti-intellectualism and our slide into a relativistic post-truth society: encounter a claim you don't like? ... well, just dismiss it as based on incompatible presuppositions outside our worldview, and turn to alternative 'facts' as evidence for what we already believe. We, too, are biased. Thus, we must seriously grapple with academic disciplines that call out our failures and wrong beliefs. But, we mustn't be so gullible as to simply swallow every critique served up by the establishment." That, I take as an acceptance of my positioning, thank you, although

swallowed-up in the middle of the courses. My current challenge is how does that acknowledgement sit with your apologetic framing?

- c. "Resource 9.2: Jesus, the Church, and Women". Fairly enough, it took a battle to get to the Malyon's official line, and change has been accepted. But there is serious examination to be had on "God transcends human masculinity and femininity" and the personalism of God. Is that transgender? Is it personal or not?

10. PE420.620_Module10_Worldviews1_Secularism.docx: the weakest of the weak apologetics; what do you think various secularist worldviews are? I suggest the thinking of and critiques of are all entangled;

- a. The point being "Charles Taylor, in his classic, *A Secular Age*, refers to this as 'exclusive humanism'", which is not the analysis I am hearing in the evangelical historiography on its discussion on humanism. How can you critique 'exclusive humanism' and not also critique 'exclusive evangelicalism'?
- b. A part of the problem is the limits in the concept of "dialogos: bilingual public theology". Surely, there are much more than two positions: 'Us and Them';
- c. "3.1 'Uncommon Good: Peaceable Dialogue for Partisan Times'" If peace is what you want, why do you not take seriously my critique of "Finding Peace from the Culture-History War: A Historiographical Message for the Times";
- d. "Beating the Unbeatable Foe—Fred Schwarz;" "Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the Sixties—David Horowitz and Peter Collier"??? Really, the former was 1950s Cold War propaganda, the latter neo-con political positioning. Many of your sources, as critiques of "various secularist worldviews" are known as selling political agendas, as neo-conservatism from what I can browse;

11. PE420.620_Module11_Worldviews2_MoralRelativism: I do not see, in way you have developed the course, a true engagement with my existentialism, nor the wider history of Christian existentialism and as well Christian post-theism, and for that matter contemporary philosophic defences of nihilism (i.e., James Tartaglia's and Tracy Llanera's (2021), *A Defence of Nihilism* (New York: Routledge);

- a. Moral relativism is such a conflated term in popular debates; philosophically it does mean something, but something much more nuanced than what has been presented;
- b. There is something of not being able to "have the cake and eat it", my comments above, in what is being presented;

12. PE420.620_Module12ppnt: To brief since I have only the slides. I do not believe that evangelical historians and sociologists can critique "Worldviews: Eastern Pantheistic Monism, and New Spiritualities (New Age, Syncretism & Occultism)" until the

implications are explored in Amos Yong's recent *theological* work. Note Yong's endorsement of Walter Hollenweger's *Theologically Responsible Syncretism*." It raises important questions. See an earlier version of my paper under publication consideration (NOT FOR RELEASE), "Fuller view for Telling the Story of Australian Evangelical History (PRESENTATION HANDOUT)." I am giving you an evangelical alternative to apologetics in Yong's theology (it does **not** matter whether I agree with it or not);

13. PE420.620_Module13_Conclusion: I **applaud** you for the motivation in humility but I do not think that the genre of apologetics can deliver it; unless it becomes the 'Death of God' (idol) and disassembles its confusion back into the proper threads of the disciplines;
 - a. I have always pondered the evangelicalisation of Dorothy L. Sayers (you can understand that of C.S. Lewis which is also stretching the history), since friends in the world of literature, outside of the evangelical bubble, questioned the link. A project for another day, or for someone else; Reading, anyway, the very literary quote, it reads as a critique of evangelical drama; drama we can do without;
14. PE620.2017-UNIT-GUIDE_CHRISTIAN-APOLOGETICS: I understand the course in its 'basic Christianity' but the Lewisian concept is problematic if it seeks to leave the historical evangelicalism unexplained; very different to the apologetics of the various Catholic positionings, High Anglican Radical Orthodoxy, and, dare to say, very opposite of liberal evangelicalism, see Geoffrey R. Treloar (2022). Towards a History of Liberal Evangelicalism, *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, 2:20, 30-63.

Dave Benson, a good friend, produced the following response to the Buch critique:

1. From Cameron Cotherman's book on *To Think Christianly* - definitely track this down, as his original letter-based research especially on interactions between Schaeffer and Jim Houston (Regent) and Cotherman's own conclusion, all suggest that while genuine good was done in Schaeffer opening up a conversation with non-Christian sources, his lack of vital connection to a scholarly community meant that increasingly this became weaponised and caricatured academic movements rather than being in touch with original thinkers ... those downstream of Schaeffer often went where he couldn't, as they had a PhD, kept attached to scholarly thought, etc.
2. There's a pragmatism (not in the sense of a philosophical American Pragmatism a la Charles Peirce, but just the reality of life and trying to get by) that does drive the 'game playing' of which you speak ... it's often far less principled and just making do with broken situations where nothing is ideal. For instance, each year at Malyon we would sign a 'statement of belief' - which upon closer scrutiny most of us as scholars couldn't sign with total integrity as it was framed in the 1980s, shaped by American

fundamentalism, and drawing on e.g. inerrantist understandings of the Word of God (which we would now hold to inspiration and primacy, but rarely a wooden literalism), language about eternal destruction drawing on 'eternal conscious torment' to do with hell (whereas now we most all agree in some form of conditional immortality, free of neo-Platonic conceptions of an eternal soul) ... and pastors were still required to sign statements about not drinking alcohol, which had a principle when working with youth, but is now seen as boundary markers of an especially conservative culture ... but on most of these fronts, the statements were ratified and passed into the constitution back in the 80s, and trying to revise them at this point would take significant time, resources, cause fights, so typically we add 20 footnotes in our mind to better define both the words and spirit of the law, signing the statement for what we wish it said, but recognising that it's far from perfect. I applied for QB superintendent, and said on a few fronts (alcohol, women's ordination, etc.) that if I were installed, I would directly address this, as how can we with integrity present Christian faith to our neighbours when our house is in disarray ... but I didn't get the job, and it has shifted back to the bottom of the pile of priorities. ... which makes sense - if our primary concern is forming a healthy church that engages well in the world, then it's arguably a misuse or poor stewardship of resources to make this alignment/consistency a top priority. ... So, we triage work, responsibilities, and there are inconsistencies throughout.

3. re: the priority of apologetics, it's typically an elective subject in most colleges, which only some students do, so I don't know if I would say it's greatly valued, or characteristic of evangelical engagement. But, given that theology is its own discipline - just as physics, or history, or sociology, their own discipline, not integrating theological thought into their busy courses of study - and students are doing shorter degrees e.g. 1 year postgraduate, there is virtually no thoroughgoing integration with other fields - perhaps systematic theology addressing philosophical theology and epistemology and the nature of reality, or in Church history addressing how history works as a craft ... even pastoral theology is essentially technique, applying skills and theological reasoning to a concrete situation within the church, vs. an interdisciplinary conversation to seek wisdom ... so when we try and draw on other fields few of us have studied in apologetics, it's bound to be a train-wreck, as we're using derivative sources seeking fruits of other fields to make non-native arguments that bolster the faith of the insider and purport to convince/persuade the outsider ... but as you said, outside uninformed populist appeal, this rarely lands with scholars.
4. That said, 'apologetics' as the craft of giving public reasons for your personal faith must continue, as it does in every field ... we all give reasons for what we believe, and need language to connect ... so studying this as a craft (not a discipline) does matter ... just it needs to be more humble recognising that we're wading into whole disciplines beyond our remit or understanding, and it must be dialogical, not seeking to convince all people, but simply interacting in a bespoke way with *this* particular person, who we listen to, and then graciously explain why we see things the way we do. There can be

integrity in this ... but it's far better done when we're reading and engaging with genuine scholars in these fields, rather than cherry picking and/or weaponising random points largely out of context that suit our goals.

Benson has well come to the compatibilist meeting point with the Post-Christian critique; such that it is the “end of apologetics”, albeit Benson’s late suggestion that Apologetics could be defined as pastoral care; from a quote at the 2023 European Leadership Forum in Wisla, Poland, from German theologian and apologist, Julia Garschagen: ‘Apologetics is pastoral care of the mind.’



Pastoral Care theorists might disagree, apologetics, in the past, has spoken too much in public relations sloganizing, but the substantive point is that evangelical apologists are having to agree with the notion of the end of apologetics conceptualised in modernity: 1) apologetics became weaponised and caricatured academic movements rather than being in touch with original thinkers; 2) the American pragmatism in apologetics drove the ‘game playing’ thinking; 3) apologetics does not work as a discipline of learning; **but** 4) the remaining apologetic of evangelical apologetics does **not hold** in the Blochian historiography and contemporary philosophy of education, i.e. Benson’s point:

“That said, 'apologetics' as the craft of giving public reasons for your personal faith must continue, as it does in every field ... we all give reasons for what we believe, and need language to connect ... **so studying this as a craft (not a discipline) does matter** ... just it needs to be more humble...”

The Buch critique, however, is only partly on the social psychology of attitudes; it goes to the Blochian historiography and contemporary philosophy of education

Blochian Historiography and Contemporary Philosophy of Education

Gert Biesta’s 2023 PESA presentation, “The Point Where I Stand To The Place Where I Can Be Found: The Critique Of Perspectival Reason As Philosophy For Education,” goes to Buch’s critique. Personal attitude is based on personal perspective but that rarely connects with world-centred education (Biesta 2021). The bubble thinking has to allow the issues of the ongoing climate emergencies, large-scale ecological and environmental disasters, mass migrations and displacement in the world, to enter without the gatekeeper of apologetics. It is almost a motherhood truth in the philosophy of education literature, in the literature on

- politico-economic perspective (Payne 2015; Konkol, Stumme, Nuñez 2016; de Saxe, Trotter-Simons 2021; Latecka 2023; Giroux 2023; Sinha, Gera 2023; Peters 2023),
- and human characteristics – *lebensphilosophie* (Sumsion 2000; O’Brien 2013), including
 - freedom and dissent (Amsler 2017; Bradley 2023; Bojesen 2023; Dronsfield 2023)
 - rhetoric and discourse, storytelling (DePalma 2017; Gomoll et al 2017; Greene, Burke, McKenna 2018),
 - imagination (Potyondy 2014; Gutiérrez et la 2017; Mirra, Garcia 2017; Dyke, Meyerhoff, Evol 2018),
 - temporalities (Kidd 2023),
 - intellectual historizing (Coady 2023),
 - community (Beck, Medina, Reeves 2017), and
 - the capacity for caring (Jackson et al 2023).

Blochian Historiography of the early twentieth century can be matched with the features in the philosophy of education, which is missing in the apologetics approach:

- politico-economic perspective: “ It would inflict a strange mutilation upon humanity to deny it a right to appease its intellectual appetites apart from all consideration of its material welfare. Even were history obliged to be eternally indifferent to *homo faber* or to *homo politico* it would be sufficiently justified by its necessity for the full flowering of *homo sapiens*. Yet, even with this limitation, the question is not immediately resolved. ...let us add Spinoza — Spinoza of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, that pure masterpiece of philological and historical criticism — also 1632” (Bloch 1954, 1992: 8, 70);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, the importance of the intellectual histories in untangling the politico-economic perspective.

- and human characteristics – *lebensphilosophie*: “ Behold, then, the historian called to render his accounts! He does so not without an inner tremor. What craftsman, grown old in his trade, has not asked himself with a sudden qualm whether he has spent his life wisely? The question far transcends the minor scruples of a professional conscience. Indeed, our entire Western civilization is concerned in it.” (4);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, of the early twentieth century *lebensphilosophie*. It is knowledge production of crafting, not calculating power relations.

- freedom and dissent: “ Therefore, I shall be keeping faith with their teaching in criticizing them most freely wherever I may deem it useful; just as I hope, some day, that my pupils will criticize me in their turn.” (3);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, and we understand that freedom and dissent is all of criticism, creativity, and dissent to give new *lebensphilosophie*.

- rhetoric and discourse, storytelling: “ For history is not only a science in movement. Like all those which have the human spirit for their object, this newcomer in the field of rational knowledge is also a science in its infancy. Or to explain more fully, having grown old in embryo as mere narrative, for long encumbered with legend, and for still longer preoccupied with only the most obvious events, it is still very young as a rational attempt at analysis. Now, at last, it struggles to penetrate beneath the mere surface of actions, rejecting not only the temptations of legend and rhetoric, but the still more dangerous modern poisons of routine learning and empiricism parading as common

sense. ... The most unpretentious of our newspapermen intentionally presents his characters, even at the cost of the truth, in accordance with a rhetorical tradition whose glamor our age has not outworn, and our editorial staffs include more disciples of Aristotle and Quintilian than is generally believed.” (11, 81);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, in the poetic language of history, It illuminates history (to the noun) and history construction (to the verb).

- imagination: “ The spectacle of human activity which forms its particular object is, more than any other, designed to seduce the imagination - above all when, thanks to its remoteness in time or space, it is adorned with the subtle enchantment of the unfamiliar. ... These false conclusions are not at all imaginary, and one could make a long list of facts which scholarly routine first denied because they were surprising — from the Egyptian zoolatry with which Voltaire was so highly amused, down to the Roman remains of the tertiary era. On closer inspection, however, the methodological paradox is only on the surface. The principle of reasoning from similarity loses none of its force. It is only essential that a more exact analysis should distinguish the range of possible divergence, while making clear the necessary points of similitude. ... to those motives which their historian attributed to them. The error was in considering this hypothesis as given at the outset. It needed to be proved. Then, once this proof — which we have no right to consider as unfeasible out of prejudice — has been supplied, it still remains for us by digging deeper into the analysis to ask why, out of all the imaginable psychological attitudes, these particular ones should have imposed themselves upon the group. For, as soon as we admit that a mental or emotional reaction is not self-explanatory, we are forced in turn, whenever such a reaction occurs, to make a real effort to discover the reasons for it. In a word, in history, as elsewhere, the causes cannot be assumed. They are to be looked for... . (7, 100, 163 the end of the book);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, on overcoming prejudice in the critique of some meta-reflective imaginable psychological attitudes: how prejudice is thought and then how can it be reimagined. Note this is the conclusion of the Bloch translation, Bloch being prematurely killed, well before the book.

- temporalities: “Bloch reaffirmed his commitment to this view, mocking the emphasis on reigns and regimes in textbooks for schools and universities alike

and suggesting that periodisation should depend on the phenomena being studied. ...It seems necessary to point out that the French for "century" is *siècle*, which also means 'age' or 'era' or 'temporal world,' in which sense the Latin *saculum* occurs in Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue* and in the *medieval Dies Ira*" ... Despite the Pythagorean dreams of certain authors, it is obvious that the periodicity of the generations is by no means regular. As the rhythm of social change is more or less rapid, the limits contract or expand." (Preface by Peter Burke xvii; Translator's note, on bottom of 150; 153);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, in being able to use periodisation as a tool, without being trapped in its mindset.

- intellectual historizing: "The other school of inquirers took a quite different point of view. Unsuccessful in cramming the stuff of history into the legalistic framework of physical science, and particularly disturbed, because of their early training, by the difficulties, doubts, and many fresh beginnings required by documentary criticism, they drew from their inquiries the moral lesson of a disillusioned humility. In the final reckoning, they felt that they were devoting their talents to a discipline which promised neither very positive conclusions in the present, nor the hope of progress in the future. They tended to view history less as truly scientific knowledge than as a sort of aesthetic play, a hygienic exercise favorable to health of mind. They have sometimes been called *historiens historisants*, possessing the truly 'historical' point of view; but such a judgment does injury to our profession, for it seems to find the essence of history in the very denial of its possibilities." (13);

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, a warning to the intellectual historian to remember to combine ideas with persons in humility.

- community: "Even within the most unified nations, such as ours, each little professional community, each group distinguished by virtue of its culture or wealth, has its own characteristic form of expression." (137); and

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, on the community of professionalism and its subjectiveness to all types and diversities of character:

- the capacity for caring: “ Without doubt, too, civilizations may change. It is not in itself inconceivable that ours may, one day, turn away from history, and historians would do well to reflect upon this possibility. If they do not take care, there is danger that badly understood history could involve good history in its disrepute. But should we come to this, it would be at the cost of a serious rupture with our most unvarying intellectual traditions” ... On that day when, having first taken care not to discourage it with useless pedantry, we shall succeed in persuading the public to measure the value of a science in proportion to its willingness to make refutation easy, the forces of reason will achieve one of their most smashing victories. Our humble notes, our finicky little references, currently lampooned by many who do not understand them, are working toward that day.” (5, 74).

Bloch speaks to us today, in 2023, linking intellectual traditions and persons to the philosophy of caring. Bloch frequently uses the word, ‘care’, in *The historian’s craft*.

There is a network of ideas in Bloch for us which demonstrates the difference between the philosophy of education discipline and the corporatised art of apologetics. It is that disciplines have the ideas of rhetoric, politics and economics, and human characteristics – *lebensphilosophie* – including freedom and dissent, storytelling, imagination, a human sense of time, diverse and networked ideas, community, and the capacity for caring.

The Ongoing Conclusion: The Educated Society

On this basis, the College courses of Christian college do more harm than good. There are several defuncted (dysfunctional) characteristics of apologetics teaching.

01. Imagining an Education Society

In different ways – nationalism (Richardson 2002), understanding marginality and outliers (Greenleaf, Hinchman 2009; Hughes, Miller, Karls 2022), and multiliteracies (Jacobs 2013; Rhodes, Alexander 2014) – apologetics misses what it is to imagine an Education Society.

02. Spiritual Leadership

Apologetics teaching prides itself on its spiritual leadership, but too frequently it misses the “Critical and Spiritual Engagement” of “Transformative Instructional Leadership” (Dantley 2011).

03. Thinking for Peace

Apologetics teaching is almost completely unaware of the historiographical failure, in its leaning into culture-history rhetoric (Buch 2021).

04. Language

Those who perform apologetics teaching would like to think it goes to the reframing rhetoric of fear with narratives of agency and hope (Caraballo, Martinez 2019). Apologetics, however, is grounded necessarily in the defensive posture of defence, and this is the reason why it struggles in leveraging Language.

05. Politics and Policy

Finally, too often, those on the ground are too resistant to messages of Globalization and Transnationalism (Lauria, Mirón 2005). Those at the top, the decision-makers, are sensitive to that groundswell of resistance. It is for this reason that poorly understood or harmful educational policies are difficult to change across the levels of governances.

Apologetics courses in Christian colleges should be scrapped. In many cases, such courses are either collapsing or being redesigned. The better educational philosophy would be in the teaching of reasons for faith -- that is, such what was 'apologetic' sources -- be returned back into the larger disciplinary and open discourses of history, sociology, philosophy, and theology proper.

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