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### A Wholistic Model of Apologetics for Equipping the Youth

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ABSTRACT

A WHOLISTIC MODEL OF APOLOGETICS  
FOR EQUIPPING THE YOUTH

by

Selim Kesmez

Adviser: Zoltán Szallós-Farkas

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A WHOLISTIC MODEL OF APOLOGETICS FOR EQUIPPING THE YOUTH

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Date completed: June 2016

### Problem

While available studies indicate that biblical world view among young adults decreases in years of secular education Adventist education system in Germany is struggling to address the needs of the young adults. The question arises what kind of needs can be identified why they leave faith and church behind and how the Church may counteract this process and provide valuable assistance. The urgency of this question emerges in considering the high rate of de-conversion among Adventist youth.

## Method

This study analyzes various studies and statistical reports regarding the condition of the spiritual life of young adults in both the secular and Christian community, focusing especially on their unmet needs. To examine the target group of young German Adventists between 16 and 31 years of age specific data has been conducted by a questionnaire about the apologetic abilities among this group.

## Results

The results of the study show that almost all de-conversions (96%) come about until the age of 35 and that among Adventist youth the de-conversion rate is around 50%. The underlying reasons of de-conversion are categorized in intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects.

## Conclusions

In a time of multitudes of contradicting world views and concepts, apologetics can be used to strengthen biblical world view among young Adventist adults. A systematic approach of apologetics needs to be comprehensive to meet the needs of young people in secular environments. Such an implementation of apologetics with components of intellect, affection, and spirituality can counteract the process of de-conversion by fostering a solid basis of faith, namely a biblical world view. It presents an effective instrument to educate the youth and can empower young people in well-founded and well-justified faith so they are able to defend their faith for themselves and others.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A WHOLISTIC MODEL OF APOLOGETICS  
FOR EQUIPPING THE YOUTH

A Thesis  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Religion

by  
Selim Kesmez  
June 2016

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FOR EQUIPPING THE YOUTH

A thesis  
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Selim Kesmez

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARIS	Americans Religious Identification Survey
EI	Emotional Intelligence
FACIT	Für Adventistisch Christliche Identität und Toleranz
NASB	New American Standard Bible
OCCA	Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The generation of young Adventists today determines the future condition of the Seventh-day Adventist church. At a very early stage the Adventist church started to establish educational institutions in order to train and equip young people in theology and other related skills to open their hearts and minds to a biblical understanding of the events in this world from a heavenly perspective and to the imminent expectation of the Christian *hope*, that is the salvation and return of Jesus Christ. Having this hope in mind, Peter called in 1 Pet 3:15 on all followers of Jesus to be courageous and without fear of hostile reactions, rather to honor Christ in their hearts and *defend* that hope before all people with “gentleness and respect”.

Someone could argue that 1 Pet 3:15 is found in a passage on defending faith during persecution.<sup>1</sup> Today, in the Western world we are facing challenging social issues but hardly ever physical persecution like the first Christians did. So again, the question arises whether and why apologetics is needed in a postmodern era? Which considerable reasons recommend apologetics today? A closer look reveals that biblical faith in its essence has never been weaker than today.

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<sup>1</sup> Various keyword indicate that the context is about defending faith in times of persecution: v. 13: “harm you”; v. 14: “you suffer”; v.17: “you suffer”.

The answer to the question why is closely related to the reason why we need applied apologetics maybe more than ever. Peter's statement at this point is the origin of the theological discipline of apologetics and will be the center of the current study, with regard to the generation of young adults. Why so? The reason why apologetics and youth are linked in this study is related to the fact that during the years of schooling (primary and secondary or university) they are confronted by secular ideas and world views (e.g. atheism, naturalism, humanism, or relativism) and estimates and studies indicate that in this time most de-conversions take place amongst others because of the lack of a firm biblical world view. The question arises if und in what way apologetics may sustain a biblical world view among young people by implementing apologetic aspects in the Adventist educational system.

Apologetics is not only an approach that can be used with external effect, viz. addressing people who disagree with our biblical world view, but also inward looking by implementing suitable educational precautions in order to form a solid basis for a biblical world view where mature faith is able to grow. Such apologetic education may serve the purpose of defending the biblical world view as trustworthy and reliable for young people.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While our Western society is continuously changing and becoming more and more secularized, statistics indicate that the Adventist education system in Germany's youth department is struggling to address the needs of the young adults. Postmodernism and secularization call for a reform of the educational system in the German Adventist youth department. Available studies, which have been carried out, show a huge loss of

identification with the biblical world view among young believers during adolescence and the years of schooling. As a result, many live and practice their faith with decreased intensity. Some leave their former convictions and beliefs behind and commence the process of de-conversion, in case of baptized members noticeable by decreasing numbers of church members or personal statements in conducted surveys.

So, the first question of this study will be: What kind of needs can be determined based on the latest studies that have been conducted? Subsequently, a fundamental question has to be answered: In what way can apologetics provide good answers to the present circumstances to deal with the needs of the youth? And is the traditional approach of apologetics adequate for applying it on youth education or does it need a different approach of apologetics in order to affect youth ministry more beneficially?

### **Justification of the Research**

The aim of the present study is to explore the status quo of the spiritual life of young Adventists between 16 and 31 years of age, especially in Germany. Object of research are their needs, if left unaddressed often lead to de-conversion. Further, this study is to examine a new approach of apologetics that provides valuable assistance during the years of primary and secondary school as well as university when secular ideas influence the spiritual life of the youth and often cause a shift towards de-conversion.

This study deals with the issue of how to maintain and foster a biblical world view in the realms of the Adventist church providing a solid basis of faith for young people that accompanies them through the years of secular schooling and influence where most de-conversions take place.

## Definitions of Fundamental Concepts

One fundamental concept presented in this study is *biblical world view*. A biblical world view entails not only mere faith in spiritual matters but provides a view of the world starting from the initial position of the Bible to every dimension of human existence. All “ideas, principles and metaphysical claims“ are interdependent and in harmony with the biblical account.<sup>2</sup> Francis J. Beckwith puts it this way, “These beliefs are not mere utterances of private religious devotion but are propositions whose proponents claim accurately instruct us on the nature of the universe, human persons, our relationship with God, human communities and the moral life.”<sup>3</sup> Such an understanding of the world that is based on the scripture called Bible forms the term *biblical world view*.

When it comes to the topic of *Spirituality* a precise description is indispensable to avoid misunderstandings regarding this issue. But before, it should be clarified why the definition of the concept of Spirituality needs to be included in the introduction. Spirituality is fundamental with regard to an apologetics that claims to be comprehensive. And this is the case because comprehensive apologetics aims at achieving biblical spirituality and will find its expression in two ways: the intellectual-informative discourse combined with the applicative-formative (educational) feature of apologetic, both of which are integrated within the very concept of biblical Spirituality.

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<sup>2</sup> Francis J. Beckwith, “Introduction,” in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview : Essays in Honor of Norman L. Geisler*, ed. James P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



In other words, information (intellect/mind) and formation (character/heart) are substantial to both the personal life of the apologist and also to the beneficiary of apologetic instruction (the SDA youth in Germany). This is the reason why the term Spirituality needs to be defined from a biblical point of view, all the more now that there are so many confusing views on what spirituality is in its essence (a mixture of ideas and practices coming from New Age, voodoo, charismatic movements, yoga, tantric meditation, Jesus prayer, dream work etc.), moreover because the term is not used uniformly and can be used in several different ways, academically and in everyday language.<sup>4</sup> In our pluralistic society a *New Spirituality* gets more and more attention: New Spirituality is defined by the individual alone and stands in contrast to the Old Spirituality where God and Spirituality “have already been defined [...]”.<sup>5</sup> In this research project the term is used meaning *Old Spirituality* with a biblical background. The understanding of the nature of God and humans in the Bible determines strongly what is to be understood by the term *Spirituality*.<sup>6</sup> Expressed in the research done by Zoltán Szallos-Farkas *Spirituality* “concerns the question of how individual and corporate entities understand and seek to achieve a 'fulfilling', 'integrated' and 'meaningful' existence within a given 'religious' or/and 'cultural context [...]’.”<sup>7</sup> Further, Szallos-Farkas addresses the issue of

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<sup>4</sup> Zoltán Szallos-Farkas, “Spirituality of Human Sexuality: A Theological and Anthropological Perspective”, in Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza, eds., *Biblical Research Institute Studies in Biblical Ethics*, vol. 1, *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects* (Silver Springs, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 123.

<sup>5</sup> Ravi K. Zacharias, *Why Jesus?: Rediscovering His Truth in an Age of Mass Marketed Spirituality* (New York: FaithWords, 2012), n.p.

<sup>6</sup> Zoltán Szallos-Farkas, *A Search for God: Understanding Apocalyptic Spirituality* (București: Editura Universitară, 2010), 20–21.

<sup>7</sup> Zoltán Szallos-Farkas, “An Exploration of the Rise and Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Spirituality: With Special Reference to the Charismatic Guidance of Ellen G. White, 1844-1915” (Editura Institutului Teologic Adventist, 2005), 3.

Spirituality in his research paper from an Adventist perspective and he came to following conclusion regarding the definition,

‘Spirituality’ is a term which designates *a certain way of life*, both personal and collective, that is brought about by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12-15; Gal. 6:1). This means that the Holy Spirit unites us with Jesus Christ (1 John 4:13; Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:3) by faith in the Word of God revealed within the Scriptures (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23). It is in this way that the Holy Spirit transforms, in a progressive manner, our moral character to emulate the moral character of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

This definition of biblical spirituality will be used in the current research paper.

The term *biblical faith* is part of biblical world view and describes the divine gift of believing in something outside the viewable sphere, receiving the Holy Spirit. Faith “is the means of receiving a new standing before God and a new relationship with God.”<sup>9</sup> Szallos-Farkas identified such way of life with biblical spirituality.<sup>10</sup>

### **Review of Literature**

While there are innumerable publications on apologetics, there are a few on the issue of youth ministry and education. The following literature provided essential impact on this topic and therefore on this study:

Ravi Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler started a project to include various articles from different authors into one volume concerning apologetics and church life. Many excellent contributions from that book will be integrated into this study.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Zoltán Szallos-Farkas, “Spirituality of Human Sexuality“, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> Raoul Dederen, *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Pub. Association, 2000), 286.

<sup>10</sup> Zoltán Szallos-Farkas, “Spirituality of Human Sexuality“, p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Ravi K. Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler, *Is Your Church Ready?: Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

Francis J. Beckwith, William L. Craig, and J. P. Moreland edited the book *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview* where not only remarkably sharp arguments are found, but also introductory questions about apologetics for building a biblical world view.<sup>12</sup>

Ravi Zacharias published another book on how apologetics could impact on people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He focuses not so much on the convincing effect of arguments alone, but also puts his emphasis on spiritual transformation and affectionate encounter within the art of apologetics.<sup>13</sup>

David Kinnaman and his studies have to be mentioned because there is perhaps no other research that provides more detailed and comprehensive insights into young adults' lives and statistics for their spiritual condition. Different reasons are analyzed and presented to ministers and parents with helpful advice.<sup>14</sup>

Stephan Holthaus, a German scholar, wrote his introduction on the necessity of apologetics. What makes his book special is the fact that he contrasted different approaches of apologetics and discussed the pros and cons of each. His conclusion is not very detailed but leaves the conviction that apologetics needs to be understood more comprehensively than previously assumed.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Francis Beckwith, William L. Craig, and James P. Moreland, eds., *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview : Essays in Honor of Norman L. Geisler* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Ravi Zacharias, "Apologetics for Today," in *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith That We Defend*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Stephan Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens* (Hammerbrücke: Jota-Publ., 2009).

Sean McDowell claims that nowadays apologetics is necessary more than ever when it comes to young adults and the reliability of faith. In his article and the book of the same title he attempts to portray the life of adolescents during their educational years and how apologetics could positively affect their spiritual lives.<sup>16</sup>

In his dissertation Aaron Kretzschmar provides a comprehensive account of different approaches to apologetics and also deals with the question of apologetics in educational manner for the Lutheran youth on a very practical level.<sup>17</sup>

In his introduction to apologetics, James K. Beilby made excellent reflections about the foundation of apologetics. He considers apologetics similar comprehensive as in this study, deviating from the traditional opinion that apologetics is merely intellectual and adding spiritual and emotional aspects to his approach.<sup>18</sup>

### **Working Hypothesis**

The working hypothesis of this study encompasses the idea that comprehensive apologetics, implemented in the Seventh-day Adventist youth ministry could foster a firm biblical world view among young people. The data or statistics indicate that there is a lack of this as well as other needs related to a comprehensive approach of apologetics. During the educational years young people often struggle to maintain their biblical faith because of the influence of opposing and non-biblical ideas, concepts, or world views. Apologetics in education may be used as a tool to strengthen young peoples' world view

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<sup>16</sup> Sean McDowell, "Apologetics for a New Generation," *Christian Research Journal*, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Aaron Kretzschmar, "Effective Apologetics Education for Lutheran Youth in a Postmodern Age" (D.Min., Oral Roberts University, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> James K. Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics: What It Is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

on a biblical basis while they are moving in environments hostile towards the biblical faith.

### **Methodology**

This thesis is based on various studies and statistics that have been conducted to examine the condition of the spiritual life of young adults in both the secular and Christian community. Many studies were obtained from the United States because the evidence of data concerning the Christian youth is more comprehensive than in Europe. To ensure the emphasis on the German Adventist target group the focus moves from the United States to the general Christian community in Germany and for the final analysis the available data from German Adventist community are consulted.

By means of direct examination specific data has been conducted by a *questionnaire* about the apologetic abilities among young Adventists. The survey covered 32 questions and eight categories that were chosen to see how well young people are capable to face apologetic issues (more detailed see the section called “Survey – Apologetic education among Seventh-day Adventist youth”). Those surveyed were young people (53% male and 47% female) between the age of 16 and 31. 47% were at the age of 16-20, 30% between 21-26, and the oldest part with 23% between 27-31. 66% of all respondents were baptized and 34% not or not yet, but in close contact with Adventist church. For this survey, people from different parts of Germany are interviewed on a random basis.

## **Design of the Study**

The study will pursue two approaches at once: the spiritual condition of young people and the question whether applied apologetics bears an influence on the condition of the SDA youth. Therefore this study has been structured inductively; first the consideration of the specific data and analysis of patterns that suggests a hypothesis and in the end leads to the theory.

Chapter 1 concerns itself with the status quo of the spiritual life of the Christian youth. Several research results reveal many common features of unmet needs in the lives of young people. Especially noticeable is the aspect of acceptance and internalization of a biblical world view among young adults. Derived from the findings in research several reasons are discussed why apologetic education is required in youth ministry in order to influence the formation of a biblical world view.

Chapter 2 investigates different approaches of apologetics that may be used in youth ministry. The focus of this chapter is to reconsider apologetics and to form a comprehensive approach of apologetics, on the basis of biblical and social elements, that is in a position of fostering a biblical world view among young adults.

Chapter 3 analyzes how comprehensive apologetics may be implemented in youth ministry and what didactical factors need to be considered.

## **Delimitations of the Research**

In order not to exceed the scope of this thesis, several delimitations have been set. In this study reasons are mentioned why people are affected in their spiritual growth and the preservation of a biblical world view. Only those reasons are discussed that might be influenced by apologetics. Other social, economic, political, cultural, or institutional

components are not or only partly included and would require another study. Especially when it comes to the research of personal issues regarding faith or world view questions only the provided data is considered, which is only a glimpse of reality.

Statistical numbers and data from research never claim to depict the whole picture entirely. Therefore, responsible use of such sources is required and the data should be taken as tendency, not as complete and impeccable.

The suggested didactic implementation of apologetics must be considered as recommendation but it is obvious that every person reacts differently: therefore the suggested method should always align with the needs and characteristics of the target group.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHY DO WE NEED APOLOGETICS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?

#### **Battle of World Views**

Does a holy God really need defense from defective human beings in this world? And how is this question related to the fact that many young people are not only leaving the church but also God himself? Stephan Holthaus declares, “Faith is and always was battle, conflict and confrontation.”<sup>1</sup> Anyone who can sense the disharmony between faith or a biblical world view and other world views will agree that people’s views in many cases differ fundamentally. One can image that biblical religion is often considered as *skandalon* in our world and is attacked from several different angles.<sup>2</sup> When someone is attacking you there are basically three options: 1) to be overwhelmed by the aggressor, 2) to defend one’s property, or 3) to take the offensive.

#### Our Responsibility

In the introduction we distinguished between offensive and defensive apologetics. Both are possibilities to react when faith comes under fire. But it is not the purpose of Christianity to become vanquished by the contemporary *Zeitgeist* of ungodliness. Apologetics is not meant to be performed by angels because God didn’t first send his

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<sup>1</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.



angels to proclaim and to defend his heritage of salvation. Throughout the centuries he primarily used humans to interact with humans in order to represent him. Kurt Aland stressed the need for apologetics because it is “a non-negotiable expression of life of the Christian church. A church without apologetics is dead.”<sup>3</sup>

### Impact on the Youth

When we reconsider the first question whether God needs apologetics we may adjust the question more properly in our human context: Do we need a defense of Christianity in our society? Or even more specifically: Does youth ministry need the succor of apologetics? In my hypothesis I suggest that ministers and also young people especially need apologetics to improve spiritual health in their personal lives and this will consequently impact the climate of our churches. Young people are people who learn new things, absorb them, and this finally shapes their world view. Particularly during these years of education their faith is challenged and attacked by institutions, teacher, classmates, and friends.<sup>4</sup> Very often Christian faith and biblical world view are accused of being untrustworthy and are despised. Moreover young believers are encouraged to join different activities like “parties, sex, alcohol, drugs.”<sup>5</sup> Alison Thomas concludes that such circumstances, combined with “the absence of mentors and accountability partners, [...] it is the perfect recipe for disaster.”<sup>6</sup> What follows is weakening process of their

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<sup>3</sup> Kurt Aland, *Apologie der Apologetik; zur Haltung und Aufgabe evangelischen Christentums in den Auseinandersetzungen der Gegenwart*. (Berlin: Christlicher Zeitschriftenverlag, 1948), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Thomas, “Challenges from Youth,” in *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith That We Defend*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 40–45.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

convictions as well as their biblical world view and in the worst case a complete de-conversion. Therefore Nancy Pearcey reasons,

As Christian parents, pastors, teachers, and youth group leaders, we constantly see young people pulled down by the undertow of powerful cultural trends. If all we give them is a “heart” religion, it will not be strong enough to counter the lure of attractive but dangerous ideas. Young believers also need a “brain” religion—training in world view and apologetics—to equip them to analyze and critique the competing world views they will encounter when they will leave home. If forewarned and forearmed, young people at least have a fighting chance when they find themselves a minority of one among their classmates or work colleagues. Training young people to develop a Christian mind is no longer an option; it is part of their necessary survival equipment.<sup>7</sup>

When it comes to numbers and statistics on the current situation of church life and youth ministry we can get an idea of how apologetics can influence the capability of viability of our youth and church. The focus of our research will be the Seventh-day Adventist youth in Germany because the generation of our youth constitutes the church of the next decades. In addition, the target group of this study are teenagers, from the ages of 16 to the young adults up to the age of 31. The research and statistics will provide a foundation to my supposition that there is a lack of apologetic education in our church.

### **Status Quo – What Are the Numbers Telling Us?**

In this first chapter we want to discover some research made in the Western part of this world especially the United States (U.S.) and Germany. In the U.S. we find a much stronger emphasis on investigating the situation or statistics, regarding the issue of the youth, than in Germany and other European countries. That is why it is important to see what the state of paly is in the U.S. and if we can apply some results of the research to

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<sup>7</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 19.

Germany. This section is divided into three parts. The first will be about the current situation of how the youth is consolidated in Christian faith and the church and how many of them are not – and in consequence leave the church and which influencing factors can be identified in this process of de-conversion. The second part deals with the issue of apologetics within the youth department in Germany with a survey based upon a sample of at least 50 interviews.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently the third part is framed by an ongoing discussion about the need of apologetics in this century.

### Statistics – Spiritual Life Among the Christian Youth

As mentioned above, more research on if and why young people leave the church has been carried out in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> This is the reason why the statistics in the U.S. should be considered first. In Germany only very few attempts have been made to investigate and evaluate the situation of the Christian youth from this point of view. But at the end of this section we will see a general tendency supported by both areas and we can therefore conclude that the development in Germany is similar to the United States.

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<sup>8</sup> This survey is continuously expanding during the process of writing and even afterwards. My intention is to use this survey in every church I am visiting. in a couple of years a much more comprehensive research will therefore be available. However for the purpose of this paper it is adequate to see what tendency the sample of interviews reveals and how it coheres with the existing research.

<sup>9</sup> For centuries Europe and especially Germany was the center of Christian theology. The Protestant movement arose from here and many theologians are famous until today (e. g. Albert Schweitzer, Karl Barth, Heinrich Emil Brunner, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, Paul Johannes Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rudolf Bultmann, Martin Buber, and Karl Rahner; see George Laird Hunt, *Ten Makers of Modern Protestant Thought: Schweitzer, Rauschenbusch, Temple, Kierkegaard, Barth, Brunner, Niebuhr, Tillich, Bultmann, Buber*. (New York: Association Press, 1958).) However today the theological world is more and more shifting towards America. And since this can be observed since the end of World War II the reason could be associated with the agreement on English as the global language. Since then the spread of English literature has been increasing. More English literature has been written and this trend is continuing. Today the center of evangelical theology is the U.S. and the most recent and comprehensive research is available there.

## United States of America

In the U.S. we find a trend from being religious to less religious and finally being not religious. In 2009 a survey was made to see how strong the religious identification is, in general. It is called “Americans Religious Identification Survey” (ARIS).<sup>10</sup> Drew Dyck summarizes the results, “The percentage of Americans claiming ‘no religion’ almost doubled in about two decades, climbing from 8.1 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 2008.”<sup>11</sup> This major progression of atheism is striking. Of course, this is not bound to the Christian or biblical faith but rather includes all kind of religion. Those who present their attitude as not religious were called *Nones*. The biggest proportion of the so-called Nones was found among young people between 18-29 years of age and 73 percent even had religious background.<sup>12</sup> The majority of young people decided themselves to leave behind some kind of faith to adapt better to their secular circumstances and present-day society, notwithstanding their religious parents or family influence. Gary Tyra commented on this development with the following question, “Why are there so many people living all around us who, though spiritually hungry, nevertheless consider themselves ‘over’ Christianity and ‘done’ with the church?”<sup>13</sup> Of course, no one can offer a simple answer to this complex question of paramount importance. But this paper will try to contribute a piece of the puzzle to answer this question.

Another research introduced in May 2009 conducted by Robert Putnam and David Campbell observes, “young Americans are dropping out of religion at an alarming

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<sup>10</sup> Drew Dyck, “The Leavers: Young Doubtters Exit the Church,” *Christianity Today*, December 2010, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Gary Tyra, *A Missional Orthodoxy: Theology and Ministry in a Post-Christian Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 38.

rate of five to six times the historic rate (30 to 40 percent have no religion today, versus 5 to 10 percent a generation ago).”<sup>14</sup> According to Rainer Research today’s numbers are alarming: about 70 percent of young people leave behind faith and church between 18 and 22.<sup>15</sup> Bradley Wright suggests that these high numbers are not realistic. He calls the “trend of young people leaving the faith in record numbers is ‘one of the myths’ of contemporary Christianity.”<sup>16</sup> His argument is that it is quite normal that some young people who leave their family to start their own live and search for their identity also leave their faith behind. But when it comes to starting their own family they often remember their parents’ faith or their former convictions and finally join the church again.<sup>17</sup>

Kara E. Powell, Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute and Assistant Professor of Youth and Family Ministry School of Theology, may have presented more realistic numbers. She assumes that about 40-50% of all young Christians turn their back on faith even if they only will not attend church any longer after they move from their parents’ home.<sup>18</sup> In her studies she accompanied more than 500 young adults during a three year period of the first years at the university. And she also discovered that about 50% of the youth would come back, typically after marriage and when children enter

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<sup>14</sup> Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). Quoted in Dyck, “The Leavers: Young Doubtters Exit the Church,” 40.

<sup>15</sup> Dyck, “The Leavers: Young Doubtters Exit the Church,” 42.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Bradley R. Entner Wright, *Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites...and Other Lies You’ve Been Told: A Sociologist Shatters Myths From the Secular and Christian Media* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2010), 69.

<sup>18</sup> Oliver Schwartz, “Warum Jugendliche in Scharen Die Gemeinde Verlassen...und Was Die Leitung Dagegen Tun Kann,” *Willow Magazin*, March 2012, 8.

their life.<sup>19</sup> However this finding should not calm us because she asks quite a justified question: What about the other 50% who will not come back? She said this grieves her a lot. And regarding the other 50% who probably will return: What they experienced during the years without God will shape their future lives and also influence their future church.<sup>20</sup> So there is definitely an unsustainable loss of young souls. David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, illustrated it significantly, “Imagine a group photo of all the students who come to your church (or live within your community of believers) in a typical year. Take a big fat marker and cross out three out of every four faces. That's the probable toll of spiritual disengagement as students navigate through their faith during the next two decades.”<sup>21</sup>

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research reported from a survey in April and May 2007 that “70 percent of young adults ages 23-30 stopped attending church regularly for at least a year between ages 18-22”<sup>22</sup> after high school. According to his finding, this had not been planned beforehand by the majority of those young adults. Only 20% stated that they had planned it in advance.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. For more detailed information see J. Budziszewski, “Off to College: Can We Keep Them?,” in *Is Your Church Ready?: Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi K. Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), n.p. The author addresses the issue “why collegians lose their faith” and provides twelve explanations for it.

<sup>20</sup> Schwartz, “Warum Jugendliche in Scharen Die Gemeinde Verlassen...und Was Die Leitung Dagegen Tun Kann,” 9.

<sup>21</sup> Dyck, “The Leavers: Young Doubters Exit the Church,” 42.

<sup>22</sup> Scott McConnell, “LifeWay Research Finds Reasons 18- to 22-Year-Olds Drop Out of Church,” *LifeWay*.

## Germany

When it comes to Germany some research is available but generally speaking the findings are sparse in comparison to the results from North America. But when puzzling together all scattered information a realistic picture is formed as well. Alexander Schulze who wrote the first dissertation on the results of a comprehensive study (Valuegenesis) in Germany among Seventh-Day-Adventist youth states “no reliable statistics about the loss of young people exists” but nevertheless some factors indicate that the situation in Europe or Germany can be compared to the trend in the U.S. “but under more negative preconditions in the society”.<sup>23</sup> In Germany the established church (Catholic and Protestant) is well known, less the more dynamic and contemporary evangelical churches. That is why church and faith are usually considered old-fashioned and obsolete. So what is the current situation of the Christian-German youth regarding the church? Three major studies are available and should be considered.<sup>24</sup>

The first I want to mention is the so-called “Shell Jugendstudie” published by the “Deutschen Shell Holding GmbH” since 1953. In 2006 for the first time the situation of today’s youth (between 12 and 25) has been analyzed in the context of society.<sup>25</sup> The researcher called the topic of this study “Eine pragmatische Generation unter Druck”.<sup>26</sup> Several areas were examined but for this paper the relevant part is “religion”. When it comes to this section another topic cannot be overlooked, “Keine Renaissance in der

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander C. Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development: The Relationship between Family and Church Factors and Faith Development of Adolescents and Young Adults in German-Speaking Europe” (Ph.D., Andrews University, 2013), 3.

<sup>24</sup> This section is aligned and inspired by the dissertation of Alexander C. Schulze.

<sup>25</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 43. In 2010 there is a more recent study published but the section of religion is less addressed than 2006. That is why we use the research from 2006.

<sup>26</sup> In English the title can be translated in this way: “A pragmatic generation under pressure”

Religion; Weltanschaulicher Pluralismus – Wertesystem der Jugendlichen entwickelt sich zunehmend unabhängig von Religion und Glauben<sup>27</sup>. The negative aspect in the heading is reflected in the statistics. Only 30% said that they believe in a personal God. 19% admitted that there has to be a supernatural power. 23% who are considered as agnostics stated that they do not know what to believe in. 28% clearly stated that there is no personal God or supernatural power.<sup>28</sup>

Another major research is the “dranStudie 19plus” which was “conducted by the youth magazine *dran* and the research institute *Empirica*, who surveyed a total of 2.825 Christians in Germany” between the ages 19 and 29.<sup>29</sup> The aim of this study was to search for the spiritual home of the youth in context of the church. Two steps were made: First, in the beginning of 2009 the volunteer employers had been interviewed if they think the church is a spiritual home for the youth. Barely 300 staff members had been asked and every sixth in the youth department answered in harmony that the church is probably not a spiritual home for young people. In contrary in late 2009 the corresponding survey was conducted with young people. But surprisingly the outcome was quite different, according to the survey 93.6% of Christian youth who were church attenders stated that for them the community with fellow Christians was important. 76.5% even explicitly declared that without church they would not be able to exercise their faith.<sup>30</sup> What we learned from this study is that even if it seems that young people do not care so much about church life, they long for a vibrant Christian community.

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<sup>27</sup> It means: “No renaissance in religion; Ideological Pluralism - value system of youth is increasingly becoming independent of religion and belief”.

<sup>28</sup> Hurrelmann and Albert, "15. Shell Jugendstudie," accessed December 15, 2015,

<sup>29</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 44.

<sup>30</sup> Results of the study taken from *dran special “dranstudie 19 plus”* (Bundes-Verlag, 2010).



The third insightful research is the “Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor”, based on research conducted in 2007 where over 21 countries had been considered representatively in the so-called “Religionsmonitor”.<sup>31</sup> In 2013 the revised version was published. For the investigation of the current state in Germany one of the main research questions was, “What forms of religiosity, spirituality, and loyalty to the Church can be observed in the population today?”<sup>32</sup> The question whether people believe in the existence of God was answered significantly different depending on the part of Germany. While in the West every second person believes in His existence only every fourth does in the eastern part of the country.<sup>33</sup> Another characteristic is striking. Not only is the patchwork family increasing in its popularity but at the same time also the trend of “patchwork religiousness” is obvious. Because of pluralism people try to adapt their beliefs to their circumstances. People piece together their religion according their personal preferences and needs which leads to “gradual disintegration of self-contained belief systems”.<sup>34</sup> While in 1950 only 4.4% considered themselves as undenominational, until 2010 a dramatic jump to 30.3% changes the current religious landscape.<sup>35</sup> Especially the Christian churches lose appeal. The Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor mentions one factor leading to the current situation: the desire for self-expression and intellectual and esthetic satisfaction.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Detlef Pollack and Olaf Müller, *Religionsmonitor - verstehen was verbindet: Religiosität und Zusammenhalt in Deutschland* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013), 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

All three major research projects analyzed the general tendency and trend regarding religion and church in Germany. When it comes to the youth in particular, some German researchers observed that usually the majority of those who abandon faith are teenagers or young adults. According to their analyses, 96% of de-converts turn their back on faith until they reach the age of 35 years.<sup>37</sup> Schulze supports this view stating, “The church is losing its children. Research has revealed that more than 50% of the potential members in the Western world leave their congregations during their teens and early 20s. Without these adolescents and young adults who constitute the next generation, the church has no viable future.”<sup>38</sup> He further explains that even if the Seventh-Day-Adventist church is a little less affected than “other Protestant churches, they [the numbers] are thoroughly alarming.”<sup>39</sup>

### **ValueGenesis**

Focusing on the youth department of Germany within the Seventh-Day-Adventist (SDA) church the most related source of statistics for the German church is probably the ValueGenesis study. The field of investigation “of this pioneering project was to learn more about the needs, beliefs, and values of adolescents and young adults in the Seventh-day Adventist church.”<sup>40</sup> It was first conducted in the United States in 1990, and repeated in the years 2000 and 2010.<sup>41</sup> In Europe the church was also interested in more detailed

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<sup>37</sup> Tobias Faix, Martin Hofmann, and Tobias Künkler, *Warum ich nicht mehr glaube wenn junge Erwachsene den Glauben verlieren* (Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2014), 33.

<sup>38</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

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

data on the European situation.<sup>42</sup> In a survey in 2007 about 6000 young Adventists “in seventeen European countries”<sup>43</sup> participated in the survey. As a result, the gap between the “religion-as-preached” and the “religion-as-lived” appeared.<sup>44</sup> Here two important observations are to be made, both mentioned by Stephan Sigg, head of the “Youth Ministries” department in the Inter-European Division, in Stuttgart on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2013. Sigg stated clearly that according to the research both *church warmth* and *thinking climate* are found markedly below the average in German speaking countries.<sup>45</sup> He was invited by *Initiative-FACIT* to speak about current church situation regarding the youth and the results of the ValueGenesis study. He stated that as young people decide for or against faith in 78% of all cases under the age of 25 the church should agree that youth ministry to be one essential key area.<sup>46</sup> In his presentation of the results of the ValueGenesis study in Europe he said that about 50% of young people leave church and 46% of the youth attending the service are uncertain if they will still be part of the church in 20 years.<sup>47</sup> The trend of de-conversion in the U.S. continues in Europe. In both areas we notice the progression of stagnation or declining in the field of youth ministry. Young people have de-converted since the last decades in increasing numbers and it affects church directly. Schulze emphasizes, “While the two-thirds who stop attending their congregations are able to make their way without church, the church will definitely not

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Manuela Casti Yeagley, *Spes Christiana*, vol. 24 (Friedensau: Theologische Hochschule, 2013), 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 24:5.

<sup>45</sup> Stephan Sigg, “Generation Übergreifend Gemeinde Bauen,” n.d., 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Freikirche der Siebenten-Tags Adventisten, Nord- und Süddeutscher Verband, and Stephan Sigg, “Zusammenfassung Valuegenesis Europe,” n.d.

make its way without them.”<sup>48</sup> The importance of searching for the reason why they rather live without church is obvious and looking for influencing factors which can prevent this trend is a matter of urgency.

### **Survey – Apologetic Education Among SDA Youth**

For more specific data about the relation of Adventist youth and apologetic education a survey has been made among young adults from the age of 16-31. We started this project in February 2015 and it will continue throughout the next years to reflect the current trend of apologetic education more and more.<sup>49</sup> The assessment tool is a questionnaire with eight topics, which are related to apologetic issues: 1) self-confidence in dialog with dissidents, 2) world view issues, 3) empowerment by the church, 4) morality and ethics, 5) creation and evolution, 6) the question of truth, 7) the issue of evil, and 8) faith and science. Of the respondents 47% were female and 53% male, 47% at the age of 16-20, 30% from 21-26, and 23% between 27 and 31. 66% of the interviewed youth have been registered as regular SDA church members – 34% are not baptized.

#### **Self-confidence in dialog with dissidents**

36% of those who completed the questionnaire declared that they were not sure if their faith was based on a solid foundation. 37% even stated that if their faith was challenged in public they would not know how to react. However, what is striking is the fact that 83% agreed that they feel confident discussing with people of other religions. Only 27% of respondents felt inferior to non-Christians.

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<sup>48</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 2.

<sup>49</sup> The author of this paper designed the questionnaire for the purpose of this study.

### Worldview issues

37% of the respondents replied that they were not acquainted with other world views (e.g. rationalism, naturalism, relativism, or humanism). 37% denied that divergent world views are often decisive for disagreement in disputes. But, on the other hand, 89% agreed that world view is relevant and crucial regarding biblical faith and salvation.

### Empowerment by the church

Every fifth of the respondents answered that the church did not empower them to find answers to elementary questions regarding their beliefs. 37% reported that topics such as world views or creation/evolution had not been discussed in youth meetings. Perceived as very positive by 87% was the relation between reason and faith in the church. More reluctant was the response about a related issue: 69% had the impression that the church avoids controversial topics in general.

### Morality and ethics

The number of young Adventist adults (37%) who assumed that there was only a relative moral standard can be considered alarming. But 97% stated that they can judge whether an action is morally right or wrong. Even more difficult to explain is the fact that the majority seemingly knows what is right or wrong but 66% of them cannot justify the foundation of their morality or ethics.

### Creation and evolution

One of the most fundamental Adventist beliefs is the creation in seven literal days. It stands contrary to the evolution theory taking millions of years. 89% of the respondents committed themselves to biblical creation. 43% assumed that there was no

scientific reason to believe in creation. Likewise, 93% agreed that the evolution theory is not well rooted in scientific facts. At this point the question arises if they could really argue for it in case of a discussion. While writing this paper we noticed that sometimes people believe in something but cannot name proof for it.

### The question of truth

Among all respondents 40% stated that they are not sure how to know truth because everyone claims to have truth on his or her side. Almost every other young Adventist struggles with the issue of truth, wrong conceptions about truth dominate many discussions. For example, 45% stated that truth is mere relative. However, truth is neither relative nor absolute. Such attributions miss the nature of truth: philosophically speaking truth is always truth and in accordance with reality – unaffected by our perception and opinion.<sup>50</sup>

### The issue of evil

For secular people this topic is often a huge stumbling block regarding biblical faith. On question we hear frequently, “Why does God permit evil when he is a good and loving God?” As often as this question arises wrong conceptions come along with it and hinder people to accept biblical world view. 34% of the respondents reported that they could not explain consistently and satisfyingly why evil resulted from a perfect and good creation. At least 27% considered God Himself responsible for evil.

### Faith and science

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<sup>50</sup> For further reading consult Konrad Paul Liessmann and Gerhard Zenaty, *Vom Denken: Einführung in die Philosophie* (Wien: Braumüller, 1998).

When asked for the relationship between science and faith, 39% indicated that faith contradicts science to some extent. After all, 93% agreed that faith and science could positively affect each other. Questionable is the response to the question if scientific theories are verified and reliable truths – about one in every fourth agreed.

### **Searching for Causes**

Anybody who is in charge of youth ministry should be roused by this drop-out rate. At this point immediate questions follow like, “What caused these young people to move away from faith and church?” and “How can the church counteract the process of de-conversion among young people?” Obviously we may not find a simple solution to such complex and dynamic issues. Different scholars identified some influencing aspects in the process of de-conversion. Faix and Künkler mention four key elements in the process of leaving the church: (1) moral, (2) intellect, (3) identity, and (4) relationship with God.<sup>51</sup> In the research done by *Institut empirica* in Marburg (Germany) we find more specific arguments. It developed five factors reasoning why young people not only leave church but also undergo the process of de-conversion<sup>52</sup>: (1) questioning of truth statements or systems, (2) criticism of the religious group and their lifestyle, (3) emotional suffering, (4) withdrawal from the religious group, (5) loss of specific religious experience. What is made visible is that in both studies recurring elements appear. There are intellectual aspects, emotional aspects, and spiritual aspects. It seems that these three key areas are very important for young people in their decision whether to stay in church

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<sup>51</sup> See Faix, Hofmann, and Künkler, *Warum ich nicht mehr glaube wenn junge Erwachsene den Glauben verlieren*, 66–124.

<sup>52</sup> Tobias Faix, “Wenn Junge Erwachsene Den Glauben Verlieren; Eine Studie Fragte Nach Persönlichen Hintergründen Und Motiven,” *Willow Magazin*, March 2014, 5.

and faith. For certain, not all criteria are involved in the personal fate of an individual but they reveal core aspects we should pay attention to.<sup>53</sup>

Schulze discloses one essential issue, “Adolescents and young adults are searching for answers, want to be taken seriously and challenged in their thinking, and allowed to wrestle with their own questions.”<sup>54</sup> Today’s trend is to highlight spiritual matters in an emotional context. Worship becomes more and more the inner core of the service in many churches. But what if this trend will continue over the next decades? Will faith with biblical world view be capable of surviving in an era of suspicious and ungodly criticism towards Christianity? In John 4:23 it is described how true worshipers will act. What makes a common worshiper a true worshiper is the interplay between two elements: spirituality and truth. None of the two can stay separated. And when it comes to our children in the church we have to put these values into practice. Spiritual orientation combined with emotional warmth<sup>55</sup> can teach the truth to the next generation because young people “are not satisfied with traditional answers”<sup>56</sup> but need to be “better educated than even a generation before”<sup>57</sup>. Schulze proceeds, “The church of today needs constructive discourse to allow the Word of God to be heard with 21st-century ears and to speak to the problems and questions of today’s generation both within and outside the church.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>54</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 269.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



Can apologetics provide help in the stabilization and rehabilitation process in youth ministry? In our opinion, it can contribute not only in the area of intellectual aspects but can also affect emotional and spiritual matters. In Germany less than 50% of those who were questioned in ValueGenesis “experience the climate of the Adventist church as open und intellectually challenging.”<sup>59</sup> I do not claim that apologetics represents a magic bullet and if we track its instructions we will have extraordinary results in youth ministry. However what I do claim is that there is a strong need for improvement of applied apologetics in the German department of youth ministry. And if we invested more in apologetics and attached value to it we might be able improve the current situation and counteract the ongoing de-conversions – especially in intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects – by educating the youth differently, so to say more apologetically. The question remains which elements should be included in a model of apologetics. Sigg confirms, “With prayer, teaching, training, and leadership of young people in the church on one hand could offer concrete assistance for their lives. On the other hand, genuine interest in their everyday lives must be part of it. It is necessary to build a relevant relationship with them and give them the feeling that they belong to it.”<sup>60</sup> According to his conviction the three most powerful aspects in the question whether a young person will be in church in 20 years are: (1) substantial sermons, (2) notice of spiritual needs, and (3) a supporting church.<sup>61</sup> Whether sermons, Bible studies, or youth meetings, we need to provide comprehensive and competent answers to intellectual

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<sup>59</sup> Freikirche der Siebenten-Tags Adventisten, Nord- und Süddeutscher Verband, and Stephan Sigg, “Zusammenfassung Valuegenesis Europe.” 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Stephan Sigg, “Generation Übergreifend Gemeinde Bauen,” 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

obstacles towards faith. We also need to cover not only intellectual issues, but to move further and show them the way to Christ. And third it is essential to do that in a fostering and loving environment to keep them emotionally healthy.

## **Conclusion**

1. The data suggests that almost all de-conversions (96%) come about until the age of 35 and that among Adventist youth the de-conversion rate is around 50%.

Purposely, we better do not use a specific age to fence the time where young people decide whether they remain in biblical faith or choose to adapt other beliefs, because this depends on the maturity of each individual person. Rather we suggest teenagers and young adults are those who experience the tension between their convictions based on the Bible and other world views the first time in their lives with full awareness. The reality is that the Adventist church, and also other Christian denominations, are losing many of their children.

2. In various research a dramatic increase of non-religious people was noticed in the last decades. Many young people adapt their beliefs to their situation in order to be in harmony with their surroundings. For instance, if they go to university and the majority of their fellow students and also the university itself are mainly dominated by evolutionist world view they often accept such ostensible convictions.

3. Often, the foundation of a biblical world view is not deeply entrenched in young people's minds and their local church missed to educate faith in a more contemporary way to meet the needs of teenagers and young adults. Two major researches in Germany have revealed that the key elements in the process of de-conversion are of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual nature. Young adults are not

satisfied with the answers they receive in regard to their questions in church. Combined with other unmet needs like the lack of emotional acceptance and spiritual experiences it nurtures an unhealthy condition of young people – which can ultimately induce de-conversion.

4. The intension of traditional apologetics is to prepare a solid intellectual ground for biblical faith that can be defended against other world views. But Peter also emphasized in 1 Pet 3:15 that apologetics has emotional impact, which can be expressed in terms of positive emotions. However, apologetics never ought to be purely rational. It should point finally to our hope in Christ which is of course a spiritual matter. Apologetics presents an effective instrument to educate the youth when it is applied with these three components: intellect, affection, and spirituality.

### **Reasons Why We Need Apologetics**

Again we ask: Does God (or we as his ambassadors) really need a defense in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In 1 Pet 3:15 we find the classical text about Christian apologetics: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (NASB). For sure, there are more passages which support the practice of biblical apologetics.<sup>62</sup> However, someone could argue that 1 Pet 3:15 is found in a passage about defending faith during persecution.<sup>63</sup> Today, in the western world we face

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<sup>62</sup> Acts 17:16-34 shows a prominent situation, which is well known and demonstrates how apostle Paul used apologetics practically. Apologetics is framed of Jesus’ call to proclaim the Gospel (Matt 28:18-20). But by doing that, Jesus’ disciples run into headwinds and had to defend (*apo* -away, *logia* - words) their faith, opinions or accusations (Luke 12:11; 21:14; Acts 22:1; 24:10; 25:8, 16; 26:2, 24; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 12:19).

<sup>63</sup> Various keywords indicate that the context is about defending faith in the time of persecution: v. 13: “harm you”; v. 14: “you suffer”; v.17: “you suffer.”

challenging social issues but hardly ever physical persecution the way first Christians encountered . So again, the question arises whether and why apologetics is needed in a postmodern era? Which momentous reasons recommend apologetics today? A closer look reveals that biblical faith in its essence has never been weaker than today. The answer to the question how it comes is concatenated to why we need applied apologetics maybe more than ever. This section will not argue about the right method and approach to apologetics, but rather if there is a strong need for it, and in which areas.

### Times Are Changing

Times are changing and the opportunities do as well. That is why we have to adapt our approaches to new circumstances. We have to realize and must admit that biblical faith is not that attractive to German society than it was over the last centuries.

People do not stumble in church, coincidentally. They do not get in contact with biblical topics very often. We cannot assume that if we open the gates of our churches the people will flood in filled with enthusiasm. From the time of the apostles in the First century on, apologetics has always been further developed and expanded.<sup>64</sup> It is our task to stride ahead. Mark Mittelberg explains, “Today people require more than to merely have the gospel declared to them. They also need to have it defined and defended. They do not merely need to decide whether to follow Christ – they need to know who Christ is and what it means to follow him.”<sup>65</sup> Especially when biblical faith is lived by millions of people but nevertheless it becomes more and more a subculture.<sup>66</sup> Since ancient times

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<sup>64</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), Preface.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Mittelberg and Bill Hybels, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 42.

<sup>66</sup> Jan Roß, *Die Verteidigung des Menschen: warum Gott gebraucht wird* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2012), 13.

during the middle ages until the time of enlightenment religion was powerful in society – today the conditions are reversed.<sup>67</sup> Jan Roß states, “It requires a lot more courage to confess to the recently small and ugly faith.”<sup>68</sup> William Lane Craige observed the progression, too. In Europe is still an “affiliation with Christianity”, he said.<sup>69</sup> But he continues by mentioning that only 10% of all Christians are “practicing believers”<sup>70</sup> and that “the most significant trend in European religious affiliation is the growth of those classed as ‘non-religious’ from effectively 0 percent of the population in 1900 to over 22 percent today.”<sup>71</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is often called the *postmodern* era. Traditional religious systems have created space for the “post-Enlightenment paradigm”<sup>72</sup>. “Objective truth” has given way to “subjective feelings” and “empirical facts” are seemingly hostile towards “spiritual values”.<sup>73</sup> It can be argued that “knowledge and truth have become relative to the historical and cultural conditions of the cognitive subject.”<sup>74</sup> Further, as Aaron Kretzschmar observes, we are facing a composition of “modern concepts” and “current postmodern ideas” which is like a spiritual stumbling block for many people, especially the youth.<sup>75</sup> Maybe one of the best metaphors or stories which reflects our current way of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 16.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Louis Markos, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 22.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Fernando Canale, “Absolute Theological Truth in Postmodern Times,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, no. 45 (Spring 2007): 87.

<sup>75</sup> Kretzschmar, “Effective Apologetics Education for Lutheran Youth in a Postmodern Age,” 2.

thinking relating to truth is “The Blind Men and the Elephant” by John Godfrey Saxe.<sup>76</sup> Richard B. Ramsay summarizes the two crucial points that this picture stresses. According to the illustration, “no human being has *all* the truth, and everyone can learn from others.”<sup>77</sup> Considered from the religious standpoint, this attacks all exclusive ideas and ultimately “all religions are just different views of the same truth and that all roads lead to the same God.”<sup>78</sup> The idea of pluralism in our society has become more and more something very different from variety in terms of culture or religion. Today it is pluralistic “in the sense that this plurality is celebrated as things to be approved and cherished.”<sup>79</sup> This shift in our society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has various reasons. Charles Taylor mentions some of them like, “extension of consumer life styles; social and geographic mobility; outsourcing and downsizing by corporations; new family patterns, particularly the growth of the two-income household, with the resulting overwork and burnout; suburban spread, whereby people often live, work, and shop in three separate areas; the rise of television, and others.”<sup>80</sup> According to Taylor, the combination of these factors have led to “expressive individualism”<sup>81</sup> that can be observed not only in today’s secular society but inside Christian faith and church.

McGrath urgently calls attention to the current situation. He feels that our time is indeed changing and the postmodern approach of apologetics is radically shifting. Now “it is in the market-place of ideas, not the seminar rooms of universities, that Christianity

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<sup>76</sup> Richard B. Ramsay, *The Certainty of the Faith: Apologetics in an Uncertain World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2007), 181.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.

<sup>80</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 473.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

must fight for its life.”<sup>82</sup> Apologetics needs to be discussed not only at the universities but on the streets of daily life because the Christian faith is being attacked by the media and in many discussions between believers and non-believers it has become daily business. So here apologetics come into play. “Although our postmodern age is challenging, it presents a unique opportunity.”<sup>83</sup> Ramsey observes the disorientation of people in moral issues and disbelief in an “absolute truth” at the same time.<sup>84</sup> Many people we meet, even young adults, experience different life crises without having an orientation in the complexities of life. On one hand, they “seem reluctant to make a commitment”, but on the other hand “they have a sincere interest in spiritual things, and both ethical issues and personal relationships are very important to them.”<sup>85</sup> Of course, it is challenging to communicate our beliefs and convictions in such demanding situations. In many cases it is impossible to share the Christian message and theology sensitively without avoiding direct confrontation. So the use of an apologetic approach seems indispensable. If anyone wants to connect to his or her postmodern friend, it can be helpful not to confront him or her with theology right away. First, we should let them speak and find out what his or her hindrance to faith is (intellectual, emotional or spiritual) and provide help. If this is the case, we are helping to defend Christian faith to our neighbor against negative thoughts or attitudes. But even Christians face difficulties in life and apologetics is not only intended for outward orientation. It can be used to help others but at the same time we

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<sup>82</sup> Alister McGrath, *Bridge Building: Communicating Christianity Effectively* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 11.

<sup>83</sup> Ramsay, *The Certainty of the Faith*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

can use it to strengthen our beliefs. When obstacles which contradict the biblical world view are removed we can progress on the way to Christ.<sup>86</sup>

### One World, Many Stories

In Germany and other pluralistic societies, we find many different views (some even totally absurd) and one has to be steadfast in his own views. Not only the number of foreigners is increasing but also the immigration of foreign ideas and world views.<sup>87</sup> So-called “Christian countries” are entering very fast into an identity crisis in a secular “post-Christian”<sup>88</sup> age arisen from the Enlightenment which was ruled by the call for “free thought”<sup>89</sup>. McGrath calls it the absence of *uniformitarianism*<sup>90</sup> which means, “there is no final judgment to be made among competing systems of ethics.”<sup>91</sup> Anyone can be and believe everything. You can say your view is correct but never say that the others’ is wrong.<sup>92</sup> As a result, it is hard to say what a person really believes. Some people are aware of the inconsistency between pluralism and the exclusive religion.<sup>93</sup> Pluralism

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<sup>86</sup> Ramsey is presenting the most common “hard questions people ask”: “How can you prove God exists? How can you be sure the Bible is true? What about apparent contradictions and errors? What about other religions? How can you be sure they are not legitimate, too? What about the theory of evolution? Doesn’t it prove the Bible is wrong? How can a good God condemn people? If God is good and all-powerful, why does he allow evil?” Such questions can be used as a starting point for further evangelistic interaction. *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>87</sup> Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Now Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), n.p. (cover).

<sup>88</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 16.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 32.

<sup>91</sup> John G. Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8.

<sup>92</sup> Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 113.

<sup>93</sup> Diogenes Allen mentions this in his book *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989, 9) “Much of the distress concerning pluralism and relativism which is voiced today springs from a crisis in the secular mentality of modern western culture, not from a crisis in Christianity itself.”



rejects “grand schemes and comprehensive systems of the past cultural efforts.”<sup>94</sup> Great stories, for instance the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Bible, are no longer valid.<sup>95</sup> This increasingly leads to a “war of world views”<sup>96</sup>. In the past, religious people agreed more on the main points of faith than today.<sup>97</sup> For instance, years ago most Christians believed in creation. Today in “the minds of evolutionists, humanists, atheists, and many scientists, there is no room for creation, no room for a Creator/Designer.”<sup>98</sup> What about Christians? Some of them became “evolutionists, humanists, atheists, and many scientists,” too. And in time they have come to accept new world views, too. That is why we have to use apologetics even among seemingly like-minded people. Apologetic skills can start right there and help the people find the way to truth. Due to so many confusing views we are challenged to “keep Christianity as a viable option within our society.”<sup>99</sup> Or as Richard C. Buck expressed it, we have to shape our culture.<sup>100</sup>

When we talk about apologetics we talk about world views. Apologetics is indeed the defense of the biblical world view. In our atheistically oriented society a strong dissonance or even enmity between biblical faith and other *Ersatzreligionen* with its “prophets” like “Darwin, Marx, or Freud”<sup>101</sup> is perceptible. Without a strong identity

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<sup>94</sup> Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics*, 27.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> See John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion, 2009), 14–29.

<sup>97</sup> Harry Lee Poe, *Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>98</sup> Robert T. Boyd, *Boyd's Handbook of Practical Apologetics: Scientific Facts, Fulfilled Prophecies, and Archaeological Discoveries That Confirm the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 27.

<sup>99</sup> Richard C. Buck, “Apologetics Preaching Today in the Context of a Local Church” (D. Min., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2013), 50.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Roß, *Die Verteidigung des Menschen*, 17.

with a biblical world view, the church and youth ministry cannot face reality or assert themselves reasonably.

In 2003 Moreland and Craig published a book with a philosophical approach to world views. They claim, “Members of the Christian family have a responsibility to promote worldwide evangelization, the nurture of the saints and the penetration of culture with a Christian world view.”<sup>102</sup> But unless members do not have an idea of biblical world view they cannot follow this appeal. We have to start teaching our children and teenager to develop a natural und healthy approach. Sean McDowell showed what the results are like according to his research, “Dedicated teenagers who embrace an authentic Christian world view, however, not only are less likely to abandon the faith, but are more likely to practice it in their daily lives. This is why apologetics training is such a critical component in the disciplining of youth.”<sup>103</sup> But do we invest enough in this field of practical theology? Bill Muehlenberg who is often sought out by the media gave voice to it. He called one major shortcoming in Christian ministry “the lack of a biblical world view.”<sup>104</sup> The majority of today’s young Christians are not equipped sufficiently with apologetic tools while mastering their everyday lives. Even by a low degree of exposure the danger arises of releasing faith.<sup>105</sup> Glenn Schulz assumes that the fundamentals of a person’s life are beliefs, forming values, which are seen by actions.<sup>106</sup> I agree that beliefs are fundamental. In my opinion, the need of such comprehensive system of

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<sup>102</sup> James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 26.

<sup>103</sup> Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), n.p.

<sup>104</sup> Bill Muehlenberg, “Bill Muehlenberg, Author at,” *BarbWire.com*, 2015,

<sup>105</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

<sup>106</sup> Glenn Schultz, *Kingdom Education* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 1998), 39.

interconnected beliefs of faith, called biblical world view, is indispensable. Every expression of human existence and behavior is routed by its underlying world view. And this world view is formed by the social context of the subjects' environment.<sup>107</sup> Where we are again by the importance of apologetically oriented youth ministry because it largely determines the lives of young people. Ronald J. Snider even opines that a practiced biblical world view is observable. In many cases young people are less attracted to secular lifestyle (e.g. pornography or drugs).<sup>108</sup>

There is no data of how many people in Germany have a biblical world view. But as the general statistics revealed Europe can be compared to the U.S. maybe with a slightly more negative trend. If “the current research revealed that only 9% of all American adults have a biblical world view”<sup>109</sup> how different can this be in Germany? Among Christians the percentage is higher (19%)<sup>110</sup> but is every fifth with a biblical world view enough or satisfying? There is much room for improvement. Outwardly, one main goal of apologetics is to promote a biblical world view by defending faith intellectually in affectionate encounter, whereas it can be used inwards as an educational means to strengthen the biblical world view among believers. But who can defend faith – because he or she is thoroughly convinced that it is true and essential – if he or she has never been taught or educated apologetically? We must start with our young adults who

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<sup>107</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 96–97.

<sup>108</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 128.

<sup>109</sup> Barna Group, “Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years.”

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

are about to discard biblical faith because for many of them such a world view seems little appropriate in today's enlightened society.

#### Education - Due to a Makeover

Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are well educated. Many students go to the university. What are they confronted with? Different world views which are not supporting Christian values at all. Generally speaking church and faith are facing a difficult time. They are marginalized by a number of other interests in teenagers' lives<sup>111</sup>. It is time for apologetic education for young people in order to foster a biblical world view which can spread sound faith in every corner of a teenager's life because for many young people religion is often only reserved for the "religious sector of their lives."<sup>112</sup> Markos explains the situation of young adults in secular educational facilities, "Slowly, stealthily, systematically, the truth claims of Christianity have been edged out of the academic arena and the public square into private, airtight compartment."<sup>113</sup> They come across different questions.<sup>114</sup> Additionally the aspect of "disgrace and uncoolness" gets included.<sup>115</sup> They are often assaulted intellectually and emotionally and research discloses that well-educated young adults have serious struggles with faith and questions they have.<sup>116</sup> As a result, if they do not find satisfying answers or dialog partners in the Christian

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<sup>111</sup> Jill W. Sinha, Ram A. Cnaan, and Richard W. Gelles, "Adolescent Risk Behaviors and Religion: Findings from a National Study," *Journal of Adolescence* (2007): n.p.

<sup>112</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 138.

<sup>113</sup> Markos, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century*, 22.

<sup>114</sup> Norman L Geisler and Ronald M Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 11.

<sup>115</sup> Roß, *Die Verteidigung des Menschen*, 15.

<sup>116</sup> Faix, "Wenn Junge Erwachsene Den Glauben Verlieren; Eine Studie Fragte Nach Persönlichen Hintergründen Und Motiven," 7.

community they dissociate themselves from church.<sup>117</sup> Especially after graduation they have to make several important choices – including if they will still be part of the community of believers, so to say, attend church programs and stick with the biblical truth.<sup>118</sup> It is not always an immediate break but often a slow process.<sup>119</sup>

How are they able to provide profound answers in such circumstances? We have to leave old fashioned and naive beliefs behind and take care of the new generation. They should get an opportunity to learn to answer their questions and should be able to find confidence in the purpose of faith and apologetics. This can significantly influence the process<sup>120</sup>. Do we have answers? Yes we do have answers and “there is a biblical perspective on everything—not just spiritual matters.”<sup>121</sup> Norman Geisler puts it this way, “Most skeptics have only heard the questions and believe that there were no answers. But we have some great answers to their questions. Christianity is true. That means that reality will always be on our side, and we just need to find the appropriate evidence to answer whatever question is asked.”<sup>122</sup> Further he wrote that God is even commanding us to provide the answers,<sup>123</sup> I would add, for the young generation, too. But the reality is that in North America and Europe, Christian faith is outnumbered by increasing “secularism, relativism and pluralism.”<sup>124</sup> Buck states in his appeal of why there is a

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> McConnell, “LifeWay Research Finds Reasons 18- to 22-Year-Olds Drop Out of Church.”

<sup>119</sup> Faix, “Wenn Junge Erwachsene Den Glauben Verlieren; Eine Studie Fragte Nach Persönlichen Hintergründen Und Motiven,” 6.

<sup>120</sup> Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 186.

<sup>121</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 44.

<sup>122</sup> Geisler and Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Buck, “Apologetics Preaching Today in the Context of a Local Church,” 1.

“Need for Accessible Apologetics” that “young people and adults are finding their faith in Christ more and more alien and foreign to the minds and hearts of their unbelieving friends, neighbors, fellow students and co-workers.”<sup>125</sup> It means that due to the influence of other world views people become unsure of their faith because it is so radically different from the beliefs of their close environment. Furthermore they are not capable “to respond to the objections and misunderstandings of their faith”.<sup>126</sup> Thus their spirituality is weakened and so is their biblical world view.<sup>127</sup> One thing we really need in our educational system is apologetics because apologetically oriented education can be a vital part of providing “new quality and intellectual depth to the life of ordinary believers”.<sup>128</sup> We should not belong to those who question the usefulness of apologetics.<sup>129</sup> Many young adults get lost in the universities. In an article from 2008, which is entitled on different websites “Are Apologetics Making A Comeback?” or “A New Day for Apologetics”, Lee Strobel states, “The biggest shock is that among people who communicated to me that they had found faith in Christ through apologetics, the single biggest group was 16-24-year-olds.”<sup>130</sup> Is it not enough evidence to see all these young people sitting and standing, thousands of them, in the audience of different events – thirsting for good answers to essential questions?

Young people need to be taught how they can use apologetics in such challenging situations, for witnessing and also for themselves to answer questions they carry with

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 23.

<sup>129</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 2.

<sup>130</sup> See “Are Apologetics Making A Comeback?,” *Rachel Held Evans*.

them. Christian Smith who conducted widespread research among American youth states that when many young members leave church they do not “need some radically new ‘postmodern’ type of program or ministry”<sup>131</sup> but rather taught how to articulate “matters of faith”<sup>132</sup> because “they have not been effectively educated and provided opportunities to practice talking about their faith.”<sup>133</sup> Faix confirmed that especially in the “post adolescence phase” maturity in faith is vital.<sup>134</sup> But this maturity has to be developed during adolescence, as James W. Fowler agreed.<sup>135</sup> After the age of 23 the “influence of the church on the Faith Development of adolescents and young adults”<sup>136</sup> declines. The church should take this chance to invest in apologetic training for pastors and youth ministers so that the youth can be equipped, too.

Apologetic education is very rare in Germany. We would need apologetically educated teachers first, but to my knowledge there is no seminary specialized in apologetics. Maybe some universities offer some courses but comprehensive apologetic education is still lacking in the Christian education system in Germany. The closest center is the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA) in England, Great Britain. Apologetic education in the U.S. is much more prevalent. The most popular universities for apologetics are situated there. In Germany apologetics has still not found its way into Christian educational facilities, although apologetics is relevant and timely. McDowell

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<sup>131</sup> Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 266.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Faix, “Wenn Junge Erwachsene Den Glauben Verlieren; Eine Studie Fragte Nach Persönlichen Hintergründen Und Motiven,” 7.

<sup>135</sup> James W. Fowler, Richard Robert Osmer, and Friedrich Schweitzer, *Developing a Public Faith: New Directions in Practical Theology: Essays in Honor of James W. Fowler* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 172–173.

<sup>136</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 272.

upholds his opinion that “apologetics training is (or should be) a critical component in the discipling of youth. All young people inevitably will have their beliefs directly challenged, whether while they are in high school, during college, or when they get out in the ‘real world.’”<sup>137</sup> And if they never had the chance to learn that their faith is viable in our society many will remain “afraid to share their faith or speak out for Christ out of fear that someone might ask them a question.”<sup>138</sup>

### Gateway of Evangelism

Apologetics is like a field. In the center of the field is a garden. This garden has one door, and that door is Jesus. There is one path that leads to that door. Inside the garden is eternal life in the presence of God. Outside the field, however, are rocks, boulders, thorns, thistles, valleys, hills, and many false paths that lead nowhere. The apologist resides in the field and points people to the true path, so they can find the Garden. The apologist seeks to remove the intellectual thorns and emotional rocks that prevent people from finding the true path to God. Also, there are many people who are walking false paths (cults, philosophies, etc.) who will never reach that Garden. The apologist gently guides the person, removes the obstacles, and points in the direction of the Garden. When people arrive there, it is between them and God as to whether or not they enter.<sup>139</sup>

This impressive illustration emphasizes once more, what the apologist is and what he is not. He is the one who is helping and supporting intellectually, emotionally and spiritually on the way. John G. Machen designates “false ideas” as the “greatest obstacles to the reception of the Gospel.”<sup>140</sup> However, the apologist is not the one who is responsible for entering the “garden.”<sup>141</sup> You cannot “argue someone into the

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<sup>137</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

<sup>138</sup> William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 19.

<sup>139</sup> Matt Slick, “An Illustration of What Apologetics Really Is.”

<sup>140</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Culture* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), n.p.

<sup>141</sup> Kretschmar agrees in “Effective Apologetics Education for Lutheran Youth in a Postmodern Age,” 50: “Considering the nature and task of apologetics, it is important first to understand what it is not. Recognizing that faith is created by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word alone, apologetics is not a form of conversion.”



kingdom”<sup>142</sup> in the same way as you cannot “love someone into the kingdom”<sup>143</sup>

According to McGrath, apologetics is more conversational, “where evangelism lead into an invitation to faith.”<sup>144</sup> But I would like to question this. Apologetics should start where the people are, but must not remain there; rather it moves with the people and is leading into the “garden” of faith. Of course, it is not always possible, but the goal of apologetics should be the only true heart of the matter: Jesus. Where possible, we can go that far.

McGrath adds, “Apologetics is about building bridges, allowing people to cross from the world they already know to one they need to discover.”<sup>145</sup> That is what the apostles did in their ministry to Jews and different pagan people.<sup>146</sup> In spiritual matters “the value of apologetics”<sup>147</sup>, implemented in youth education departments in church, is to

“strengthening believers”<sup>148</sup> in their confidence of what they believe and “evangelizing unbelievers.”<sup>149</sup> Many apologists today believe and teach in their academic discipline that there is a trench clearly separating apologetics and evangelism.<sup>150</sup> But apologetics and evangelism are often not visible dissociable and rather go hand in hand. McGrath admits that the “dividing line between apologetics and evangelism is fuzzy”<sup>151</sup>. Beilby is convinced that both are “closely related”<sup>152</sup> sometimes apologetics can be applied within

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<sup>142</sup> Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 33.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 17.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>146</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 21.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 22.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 32.

the process of evangelism.<sup>153</sup> He illustrates it saying, “there is no moment in which a Christian takes off her evangelist hat and puts on her apologist hat. The relationship is more seamless than that.”<sup>154</sup>

We have to ask “How can we find vivid, faithful, and dynamic ways of explaining and expressing the gospel, allowing it to connect with the hopes and fears of those around us?”<sup>155</sup> Apologetics is not a craft confined to the seminar room; it is a vital resource for all engaged in Christian ministry.<sup>156</sup> And because we have so “many excellent reasons to believe in God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ... They also serve as powerful tools in witnessing to non-Christians.”<sup>157</sup> Apologetics can be part of evangelism process and can boost its effectiveness.<sup>158</sup>

### Conclusion

Again, is there really the need for a defense of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Yes, there is. At the end of this chapter I want to review the values of apologetics we discovered.

1. The *status quo* of youth ministry in Germany can be described in terms of statistics: an alarming rate of young adults drop out of church and abandon their faith to a large number: cautious estimation of 50%. While many young people leave the church, applied apologetics in our Adventist educational system might counteract the trend of de-

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 14.

<sup>156</sup> McGrath, *Bridge Building*, 239.

<sup>157</sup> Nathan Busenitz, *Reasons We Believe: 50 Lines of Evidence That Confirm the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 25.

<sup>158</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 21.

conversion because it can meet primarily their intellectual, but also their emotional and spiritual needs.

2. Times are Changing: The current 21<sup>st</sup> century is filled with postmodern concepts which stand opposite to Christian faith. Biblical truth is far of being the standard. Spiritual stumbling blocks wherever we look. Apologetics provides various ways to cope with them. It is like a mature tool of remaining firm in truth.

3. One World, Many Stories: We believe that God has given to us apologetics as a powerful tool in preparing the way of many in a challenging and confusing world. In a time of multitudes of contradicting world views, we can use apologetics to distinguish between truth and error.

4. Education - due to a Makeover: Today is the era of high educational level but faith does often not correspond with the questions that arise in the heart and mind of young people. In our educational system, in schools, universities, and churches, apologetic education can empower young people in well-founded and well-justified faith. Young people need more than only simple answers. With trained and steadfast ministers the youth can be educated with apologetic mindset to foster biblical world view in order to defend their faith for themselves and others.

## CHAPTER 3

### FORMING A MODEL: COMPREHENSIVE APOLOGETICS

#### **Interplay – Intellect, Affection, and Spirituality**

Today's predominant standard of apologetics is without doubt of intellectual nature and according to our research of why young people abandon their faith rightly so: For enlightened and smart young people there are quite a few intellectual stumbling blocks on the way to Christ. The success of apologetic camps and conferences in the U.S. among students is remarkable and therefore comprehensible.<sup>1</sup> While apologetics very often remains solely intellectual, current publications indicate that some scholars agree that there is a need for adapting apologetics to become broader. The background of intellectual apologetics is the ancient thought of proving God's existence. And if people do so, they tend to replace faith with apologetics. Because who needs faith when you can prove that God exists?<sup>2</sup> Classic apologetics from modern age is challenged by our pluralistic society. The book "The end of Apologetics: Christian witness in a postmodern context" written by Myron B. Penner discusses this problem.<sup>3</sup> His remarks are directed

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<sup>1</sup> More and more apologetic training camps emerge. Summit Ministries, for instance, offers student conferences in different states. Popular apologists like William L. Craig speak on university campuses with hundreds of interested participants.

<sup>2</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Myron B. Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

against a solely intellectual approach which is presenting Christianity as superior to other world views. The question must be raised if apologetics indeed needs a transformation to become more dynamic and flexible.

### Intellect

Obviously, we cannot compel people to choose to believe. And we also “cannot persuade anyone to become a Christian by argument alone.”<sup>4</sup> But the necessity of reasonable faith still remains.<sup>5</sup> “The task of reason in apologetics is to “break down these barriers”<sup>6</sup> and “obstacles,”<sup>7</sup> which the “non-Christian has built up”<sup>8</sup> to protect him or her against Christian faith. However some people are more intellectual than others and interestingly there is a tendency in scholarly literature on apologetics to include emotional and spiritual aspects as well.

### Spirituality

I do not intend to take away the intellectual part of apologetics, but rather to combine it with two other aspects. James E. Taylor verbalizes, “Human nature includes intellectual, volitional, and affective elements. That is, we have minds, wills, and hearts.”<sup>9</sup> And Ramsay added the spiritual part saying that “Man’s most basic problem is

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<sup>4</sup> Ramsay, *The Certainty of the Faith*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> William L. Craig and Chad V. Meister, *God Is Great, God Is Good: Why Believing in God Is Reasonable and Responsible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 37: “If God is characterized by conscious self with rationality, free will and intrinsic value, it is not surprisingly, that we find this all over in this world in humanity.”

<sup>6</sup> John C Whitcomb Jr, “Contemporary Apologetics and the Christian Faith. Part III, Proof Texts for Semi-Rationalistic Apologetics,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 134, no. 536 (October 1, 1977): 292–295.

<sup>7</sup> Kretschmar, “Effective Apologetics Education for Lutheran Youth in a Postmodern Age,” 52.

<sup>8</sup> Ramsay, *The Certainty of the Faith*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> James E. Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics: Cultivating Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 32.

spiritual, not intellectual.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus himself used apologetics not only intellectual, rather he pointed to the scripture (which indicates that for him apologetics was part of spiritual issues) by saying the famous words “It is written.”<sup>11</sup> And at the end, apologetics’ only right to exist is to point out towards Christ – which is the spiritual aspect.

### Affection

Emotions are another part of apologetics, mirrored in 1 Pet 3:15 with the appeal to behave “with gentleness and reverence” (NASB). This should not to be underestimated. Arthur Lindsley emphasizes, “One obstacle is, that some non-Christians show more love than other Christians.”<sup>12</sup> McGrath illustrates the process of apologetics this way, “The apologist is like a sensitive doctor, prepared to talk to individuals, and listen to them, in order to establish what the real problems are, so that the appropriate aspects of his fund of apologetic resources may be brought to bear upon the situation.”<sup>13</sup> When we think of what we discovered in the statistical research we should keep in mind that people are bound not only intellectually but emotionally. It means that some people are kept from moving forward in faith, even if one provides serious answers to their questions due to negative emotions caused by other people, negative experiences, or even doctrines. All these factors act like obstacles to progress. When now the apologist enters their personal world only to argue intellectual with them, they will very likely stonewall. What Peter suggests in 1 Pet 3:15 is different. He speaks about an affectionate encounter in

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<sup>10</sup> Craig and Meister, *God Is Great, God Is Good*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> For more details see Whitcomb, “Contemporary Apologetics and the Christian Faith. Part III, Proof Texts for Semi-Rationalistic Apologetics,” 292–295.

<sup>12</sup> Art Lindsley, *Love, the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), n.p.

<sup>13</sup> McGrath, *Bridge Building*, 240–241.

gentleness than can get overcome emotional blockades and give way to arguments and dialog.

### Comprehensive Approach

Apologetics can be either intellectual or emotional, or even both. But either way the end is the same: spirituality. The goal is to lead into spiritual issues to “to the birth and nurture of faith.”<sup>14</sup> Apologetics is to be used as a tool to connect with people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> Considering all three elements intellect, affection, and spirituality, Gregory Koukl agreed in some way when he states, “These three skills – knowledge, an accurately informed mind; wisdom, an artful method; and character, an attractive manner – play a part in every effective involvement with nonbeliever.”<sup>16</sup> It becomes a useful tool and “is no time in a Christian’s life when apologetics is not helpful.”<sup>17</sup> With it, we can “put a little stone in the counterpart’s shoe. It will prompt him to think about what we said.”<sup>18</sup> Along with it various other scholars see these three parts within a systematic apologetic approach. Beilby named them “demolishing arguments” (intellectual), “contending for the faith” (spiritual), and “gentle instruction” (affectionate).<sup>19</sup> Downs confirmed that “well developed faith” what we see as *spirituality*, includes affection and cognition.<sup>20</sup> The cause is evident – truth is on one hand doctrine, which makes it transcendent and intellectual and on the other hand is truth immanent and personal: Christ who promised

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

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>16</sup> Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 23.

<sup>17</sup> James W. Sire, *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 30.

<sup>18</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth*, 21.

his presence within a follower. Ramsay suggests in his book that apologetics can work as follows: 1) demonstrate interest, 2) explain your faith, 3) furnish answers, 4) expose answers, 5) expose presuppositions, 6) navigate through inconsistencies, and 7) direct to Christ.<sup>21</sup> To demonstrate interest and to witness (1-2) it is necessary to be empathic and affectionate. The part in-between (4-6) is more rational and the end (7) is obvious spiritual.

Contributing to this topic most interestingly, German scholar Holthaus discusses two different approaches to apologetics in his book and presents his own in the end. His fundamental question is: “How to run apologetics?”<sup>22</sup> He compares two traditional schools, *Tatsachenapologetik* (apologetics of evidence) and *voraussetzungsbezogene Apologetik* (fideism or presuppositionalism).

The characteristics of *Tatsachenapologetik* are the emphasis on pure reason and the proof of the existence of God.<sup>23</sup> This approach remains within the empirical science with an inductive approach.<sup>24</sup> The clear point of criticism is the overemphasis of reason, especially in a fallen world where reason is afflicted by sin, too. In addition, this approach can primarily be used by and with people who are rationalists.<sup>25</sup> In our pluralistic society we find such people, but not merely. Many are more based on emotions and for such people this approach does not reach far enough.

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<sup>21</sup> Ramsay, *The Certainty of the Faith*, 200–213.

<sup>22</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 83.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.



*Voraussetzungsbezogene Apologetik* sees faith in strong contrast to secular world views and stresses the aspect of “being different” regarding faith.<sup>26</sup> Using a deductive approach it tries to refute other world views and speaks for the Christian world view but does not argue or try to prove that God exists because God is not tangible for human thought.<sup>27</sup> Holthaus observes that this approach is rather about conversation than discussion. Penner points in the same direction in his book.<sup>28</sup> The key message reads as follows: “Only who believes can think sound.”<sup>29</sup> Here, the point of criticism is that it neglects the fact that God works not only within the church. Rather he gave humans the ability to think and to perceive reality and also believe reasonably.

Next, Holthaus introduces another approach called *ganzheitliche Apologetik* (holistic apologetics), which is based on the work of Roland B. Mayers who wrote a book about “balanced apologetics”<sup>30</sup>. *Ganzheitliche Apologetik* tries to combine the benefits of both former mentioned approaches in a more flexible way.<sup>31</sup> As the audience is changing and humans are not the same, the approach should be flexible enough to adapt to the given circumstances. This approach assumes that all parts of our human nature are afflicted by sin but there is still desire for God’s reality.<sup>32</sup> Rational arguments can still play a role in removing obstacles in spiritual matters because faith is based on historical events (e. g. resurrection of Christ), which makes it accessible for the intellect.<sup>33</sup> clearly

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>28</sup> Penner, *The End of Apologetics*, n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 88.

<sup>30</sup> Ronald B. Mayers, *Both/and, a Balanced Apologetic* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984).

<sup>31</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 91–92.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 93.

underlined that the last step towards faith is not triggered by sole reason but rather by the act of God through his Spirit.<sup>34</sup> *Ganzheitliche Apologetik* consists of *Tatsachenapologetik* that is used mostly in dialog with non-believers and *voraussetzungsbezogene Apologetik* that is essential shortly before the last step towards faith.<sup>35</sup>

What Holthaus actually did is a move in the right direction but still not complete. He added to the very intellectually driven approach of apologetics the spiritual aspect of God's influence.<sup>36</sup> He expressed that intellectual aspects of apologetics alone cannot meet everybody's needs because human personalities differ widely. In my opinion, apologetics should not be limited in its impact to intellectual people, even if we add the spiritual part. Today many people are sensitive towards human behavior or strongly driven by emotions. When we have the law on our side or better arguments, still many people might be discouraged or offended by negative emotions either evoked by the harsh appearance of the apologist or by his own emotions towards some spiritual issues probably caused by their experiences. These considerations have led me to add the affectionate aspect of apologetics, expressed in the apostle Peter's words: "with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15b; NASB). A minister, layman, or whoever is involved in apologetic matter has the task "to bring a balance between heart and mind"<sup>37</sup> or to respond to each aspect which is needed to most. Zacharias illustrates this aspect,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>36</sup> With similar aspects another approach of apologetics is presented by Ravi Zacharias, called the *relational-reality model*. See "Apologetics for Today," in *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith That We Defend*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 333.

<sup>37</sup> Ravi K. Zacharias, "Four Challenges for Church Leaders," in *Is Your Church Ready?: Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi K. Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), n.p.

The danger of getting bogged down on the technical side of debating truth is that one could lose contact with felt needs, and hence the connection must be established. Relevance comes in precisely at the point of application. If, for example, all of the claims of Jesus are backed only by the historical, empirical attestations, someone who struggles only on the existential level will not be able to make the connection. The reason Jesus brings meaning is because of who he is.

In the same book Peter J. Grant writes about the use of apologetics in church.<sup>38</sup> In his approach he depicts the process of unbelievers who are on the way of conversion. Grant indicates that besides cultural aspects, which are in some cases obstacles, too, intellectual, emotional, and volitional trenches hinder sometimes the progress towards faith.<sup>39</sup> On the one hand “apologetics attempts to help unbelievers negotiate the journey to faith in Christ”<sup>40</sup> but on the hand it can remove the same kind of obstacles from believers what boost their journey in Christ, too.

In his publication, Zacharias takes the same line in the application of apologetics. He observes that there are two main schools of apologetics that are used to clear the way for faith or to defend faith. Depending on the apologist and his personal style, the results are diverse. The first school is classified as *apologetics of evidence* or *Tatsachenapologetik*. One well-known apologist can be used as example: Norman Geisler who is “deeply committed to the right use of the classical arguments, has been brilliant in using them.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Peter J. Grant, “The Priority of Apologetics in the Church,” in *Is Your Church Ready?: Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi K. Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), n.p.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Zacharias, “Apologetics for Today,” 332.

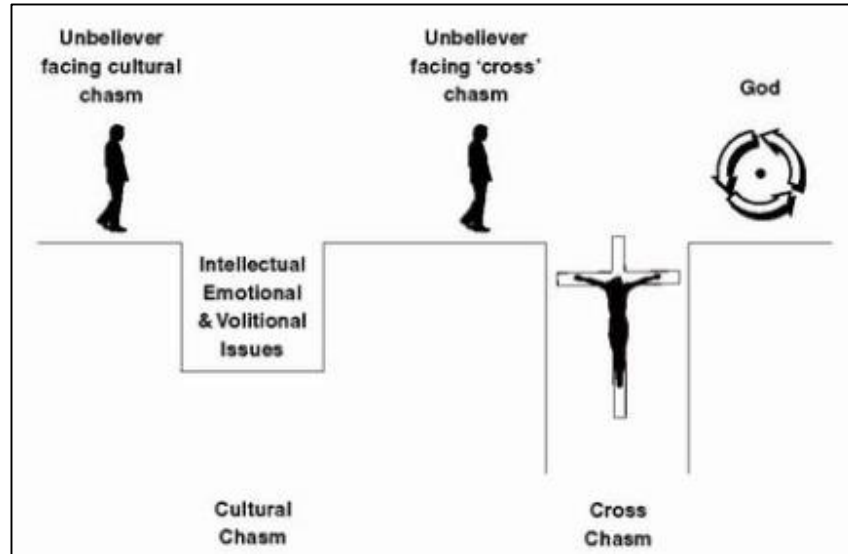


Figure 1. The cultural and cross chasm.

In comparison, we have apologists like C. S. Lewis who “appealed to the moral imagination in a way that no other has done in recent memory. His style of argument and his brilliance in the field of literature make him highly readable and in many ways capture you in Narnia without your knowing that is where he wanted to speak to you.”<sup>42</sup> Apologetic arguments wrapped in stories, inspiring imagination are appealing to the hearts of the audience. Without personal interaction he is able to address the emotions what makes them easier to accept his thoughts. In summarizing the book *Zacharias* concludes something vital,

What we have sought to accomplish as a team in writing this book is to reinforce time and again that apologetics is not to be a single-lane approach. Rather, just as a human being is a composite, so also should the approach be to that person. There is a sense in which the rational is the basis, but then issues of meaning, investigation, language, emotion—all of these come to play at some point.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 333.

## **Conclusion**

The sections above suggest that there is a need to apply apologetics more comprehensively. When we try to identify which elements should be included in a model of comprehensive apologetics we can conclude as follows: 1) Reason, arguments, and dialog form the basis of apologetics, which is primarily of intellectual nature. 2) Affectionate encounter and sometimes imagination or stories are elementary to reaching people who respond more on the emotional level. 3) All endeavors intellectually and/or emotionally should lead to spiritual matters (e.g. Bible, Christ or faith in general) and should also include the possibility of God's interaction. 4) Apologetics is also depending on the miscellaneous skills in encounter with the counterpart. When it comes to the apologetic education of young or adult church members, skills for demeanor and communication should not be overlooked. The need for its contribution will be focused on in the next section, but it is mentioned here, because it is part of the practical application of comprehensive apologetics.

## **The Missing Links**

As mentioned before, today's predominant standard in apologetics is of intellectual nature: reason and arguments for biblical faith and against other unbiblical world views frame the apologetic approach to defending the biblical world view. But current data in youth ministry reveal other needs next to intellectual matters, which should be addressed too. In this section other aspects will be examined more closely.

## Between Intellectual Apologetics and Affection

Charles Spurgeon once said, “If you are drawn into controversy, use very hard arguments and very soft words. Frequently you cannot convince a man by tugging at his reason, but you can persuade him by winning his affections.”<sup>44</sup> He clearly understood why addressing affections is crucial. Apologetics is not only about winning the argument, but about drawing people “into a loving relationship with their Creator. It often is our attitude that speaks more powerfully than our words”.<sup>45</sup> McDowell directs the attention to 1 Cor. 13:1-3 where Paul emphasized that without love all efforts are void. Further he says, “People don’t care how much you know, unless they know how much you care”.<sup>46</sup> That’s the reason why apologetics is most effective when it is practiced in affectionate encounter, when it is apparent that we live what we know – especially for teenagers.<sup>47</sup> Using apologetics to defend faith with intellectually correct and “persuasive arguments” in an un-Christian manner misses the point.<sup>48</sup> Intellect, reason, and truth are indispensable, but speaking the truth in an arrogant and proud way, maybe even harshly is to blemish God’s character, which should be manifested in his disciples. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (NASB). The theology is mainly build on Peter’s statements and for him “apologetics as about defending the truth with gentleness and respect.”<sup>49</sup> Apologetics is not detached

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<sup>44</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: Complete & Unabridged* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1954), 173.

<sup>45</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 16.

from “our attitudes and character”<sup>50</sup> because belief consists of personal experiences of faith and of personal faith convictions.<sup>51</sup> Belief is interconnected with emotions because they are part of the former experiences. When someone is referring to the dialog partner’s world view he must be aware that there are always convictions (intellect) and experiences (connected with emotions). When we talk about affectionate encounter, we have to distinguish between affection in communication and affection in behavior. It affects the way we talk and also the content of the message. It is about warmth of heart in our attitude, which is manifested in our speech and appearance.

### **Early Apologists**

After the apologetic work of Christ and the apostles the upcoming Christianity brought forth different early apologists because of the exclusive claim of Christian truth within a pluralistic Roman society and religion. This truth had to be defended from misconceptions and charges of citizens of pagan and Roman nations against Christianity and ought to be explained to others in evangelistic matters.<sup>52</sup> This caused the first apologetic testimony written “by Eusebius of Caesarea who used it as a collective description for early texts defending Christianity.”<sup>53</sup> Other early apologetic writers were: “Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Melito, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Miltiades, Athenagoras and Tertullian.”<sup>54</sup> They focused on issues such as polytheism, salvation in

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>51</sup> Ludwig Lemme, “Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche,” ed. Albert Hauck, Johann Herzog, and Hermann Caselmann (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1896), 686. Quoted in Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 81.

<sup>52</sup> Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich, eds., *In Defence of Christianity: Early Christian Apologists* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 11.

Christ and moral issues, Eucharist, and nature of God, etc.<sup>55</sup> But they addressed also matters related to the Roman society (e.g. obedience to God or the Roman state) and Greek philosophy (e.g. Gods existence).

Perhaps, here we find the origin of the distinct intellectual character of apologetics. On one hand the dominant cognitive treatise of apologetics is the result of the influence of Greek philosophy and on the other hand the logical consequence of the communicative form: written treatise. Literary work does not need that much sensitivity and empathy than real social interaction. But nevertheless there are still broader nuances of apologetic efforts among early apologists. Jesus' teaching was not sole intellectual. It was adjusted to his audience. Often he used images and parables to address brain and "heart", viz. intellect and emotions. In the same way Justin Martyr tried to communicate by "using images and symbols which his pagan and Jewish contemporaries were familiar with."<sup>56</sup> Besides the philosophical content of Athenagoras' work, his strategy was more apparent empathic. In his writings he spoke uplifting with respect about his audience and tried to connect to common ground.<sup>57</sup> Another example of apologetic work with "gentleness and reverence" as Peter said is the 14<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria: Dionysius of Alexandria. His main concern was to disprove the chiliastic ideas of Nepos. In his writing, his basic attitude was politeness and reference – in accordance with 1 Pet 3:15.<sup>58</sup> These selected examples are just to illustrate that from the beginning there was a natural

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<sup>55</sup> Stuart George Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 50.

<sup>56</sup> Engberg, "In Defence of Christianity: Early Christian Apologists," 62.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>58</sup> Walter Mohr, *Studien zur Geistes- und Herrschaftsgeschichte des Mittelalters: eine Auswahl veröffentlichter Aufsätze mit einem größeren bisher unveröffentlichten Beitrag* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001), 448.



feeling that sole intellectual approach is often insufficient. Philosophical content was therefore time and again accompanied by empathy.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

When we talk about a systematic emotional aspect of apologetics it is not to be understood as “subjective”, “biased”, or “anti-intellectual”. Since 1995 another term emerged in scientific studies, shaped by the work of Daniel Goleman: *Emotional Intelligence* (EI). It mirrors the sensitivity to deal with emotions in conversation and relationship. Nowadays, many scholars talk about it and more books are written about this topic because its value is considered as indispensable in a society with a high rate of mental and emotional dysfunctions. The core elements of EI are: “a) to understand his feelings, b) to listen to others and to feel them, and c) to express his emotions in a productive manner”.<sup>59</sup> In apologetics the EI is valuable because of its empathy and communication skills. So when we discuss the emotional character of apologetics in dialogue or personal interaction, systematically it has to be considered in the broader context of EI. Why it is important to implement emotional aspects in an apologetical model? That will be the focus in the following sections.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Actual Behind the Obvious**

In some cases, people are reluctant or skeptical towards Christianity and they verbalize their concerns in form of apparent intellectual objections. But this is only the

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<sup>59</sup> F. Ioannidou, “Empathy and Emotional Intelligence: What Is It Really About?,” *International Journal of Caring Sciences* (December 2008): 120.

<sup>60</sup> For further reading see Neil Nedley, *The Lost Art of Thinking: How to Improve Emotional Intelligence and Achieve Peak Mental Performance* (Ardmore, OK: Nedley Publishing, 2011).

packing or transmitter of issues that are more fundamental. The intellectual behavior is not always the reason why they do not want to accept faith.<sup>61</sup> Beilby agrees in this point, “The reasons for unbelief are incredibly diverse, and many of these reasons are hidden deep under psychological and personal baggage. Apologists must be sensitive to such issues, and they must realize that arguments alone will typically be powerless to overcome such deep-rooted anger and resentment.”<sup>62</sup> And often, although the conversation seems to be intellectual, originally it is driven by emotional issues that are prompting their responses in conversation.<sup>63</sup> Taylor calls to attention that our belief and knowledge is connected to and based on our personal desires and emotions.<sup>64</sup> That is why the apologist should never ignore emotional aspects in a conversation. Some people might be primarily intellectual but others hide their real issue behind intellectual matters. Markos expresses it this way, “The best apologist will not shy away from difficult questions like these but will address both the questions themselves and the anger, guilt, despair, and confusion that often lie behind them.”<sup>65</sup> It is vital to know the audience to distinguish between intellectual and existential-emotional matters. McGrath affirms that “it is important to realize that not all of these difficulties fall into this category. Some are much deeper concerns, and are not so much about problems with rational understanding as about problems with existential commitment.”<sup>66</sup> Further he agrees that it is indeed the

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<sup>61</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), n.p.

<sup>62</sup> Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 25.

<sup>63</sup> Erika Wilson, *Emotions and Spirituality in Religions and Spiritual Movements* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012), 4.

<sup>64</sup> Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics*, 65.

<sup>65</sup> Markos, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 17.

task of apologetics to identify these various needs “whatever their nature, and offer responses that help to overcome them.”<sup>67</sup>

### **Evangelism is Emotional, Apologetics is Not**

Some apologists are convinced that “evangelism sticks more to the emotional than the rational, more to the practical than to the philosophical; it seeks a decision that will lead to a change of heart rather than an intellectual assent to a particular or universal truth.”<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, Craig describes apologetics as “theoretical discipline”, which is a rational approach.<sup>69</sup> However, we already mentioned that a sole intellectual approach of apologetics falls short in a community where people are different. And the question arises if we can clearly separate between intellect and emotion. Is apologetics really only rational and evangelism primarily emotional? We agree when we say that apologetics is primarily more rational but also includes other aspects or when we say that evangelism is often used emotionally but also needs reason for decision making. Is there probably a tendency for overemphasis and inflexibility in apologetics? Dean C. Halverson suggests, “Because we are multileveled creatures made in the image of God, the intellectual level should not be our only avenue of approach.”<sup>70</sup> In both disciplines, evangelism and apologetics, there is a need for both, emotional and intellectual, aspects. Facts are needed

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Markos, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 15.

<sup>70</sup> Dean C. Halverson, “Issues and Approaches in Working with Internationals,” in *Is Your Church Ready?: Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi K. Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), n.p.

“to know what decision to make” and emotions “get them to make the decision.”<sup>71</sup> Even in apologetics images, testimonies, stories or illustrations are used to support arguments or to make them better understandable. Michael Simpson states, “communicating facts alone will not provide the connection you are seeking. When you attach an emotion to the pivotal moments in yours story, you are demonstrating vulnerability and providing a powerful link to the person with whom you are sharing.” And these mentioned tools are not sole intellectually, rather emotionally. Evangelism is similar. Christine Wood identified the components of evangelism: mind, emotions, and behaviors.<sup>72</sup> Paul Coban concludes, “After all, the holistic context of Christian friendship and community, a gospel-centered way of life, faithful prayer, and thoughtful answers are included in an appropriate believer's response.”<sup>73</sup> Again we see that apologetics includes indeed affectionate aspects (and spiritual aspects) apart from reason and arguments.

### **Church and Youth**

One of today’s phenomena is that worship and church life is often overlaid by emotional aspects. While worship does contain emotions, it is vital not to overemphasize its function. Craig suggests that “this is a good thing, emotions will carry a person only so far, and then he’s going to need something more substantive. Apologetics can help to provide some of that substance.”<sup>74</sup> Dan Kimball underlines that according to his research

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<sup>71</sup> Dick Innes, “The Art of Using Appropriate Vocabulary,” in *The Art of Sharing Your Faith*, ed. Joel Heck (Tarrytown, NY: Revell, 1991), 125. Quoted in Halverson, “Issues and Approaches in Working with Internationals,” n.p.

<sup>72</sup> Christine Wood, *Character Witness: How Our Lives Can Make a Difference in Evangelism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 103.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Copan, *True for You but Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009), 13.

<sup>74</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 19.

youth “really aren’t opposed to truth and biblical morals”<sup>75</sup> as long as they sense “that you aren’t just dogmatically opinionated due to blind faith and that you aren’t just attacking other people’s beliefs out of fear, they are remarkably open to intelligent and loving discussion about choice and truth.”<sup>76</sup> But reality shows that many young people cannot perceive this loving atmosphere. Arthur Lindsley discovered that many young people desire a warm and loving atmosphere in church but instead they sense “coldness or lack of emotion.”<sup>77</sup> And instead of “a mentor who embodies truth” they find “hypocrisy and lovelessness.”<sup>78</sup> The authors of “Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters” consulted people from outside the church and asked how they perceive the people within the church.<sup>79</sup> They noticed a general negative tendency in public perception. They referred mainly to emotional perception (hypocritical, too political, judgmental, etc.), which is the opposite of warm-heartedness. Their solution was “a straightforward but challenging idea: to shift our reputation, Christ followers must learn to respond to people in the way Jesus did.”<sup>80</sup> Ellen G. White described the attitude of Christ,

He spoke as one having authority, and His word was with power; yet in all His intercourse with rude and violent men He did not use one unkind or discourteous expression. The grace of Christ in the heart will impart a heaven-born dignity and sense of propriety. It will soften whatever is harsh, and subdue all that is coarse

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<sup>75</sup> Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Lindsley, *Love, the Ultimate Apologetic*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, n.p.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

and unkind. It will lead fathers and mothers to treat their children as intelligent beings, as they themselves would like to be treated.<sup>81</sup>

This is probably what Peter had in mind when he wrote 1 Pet 3:15. White also emphasized intelligent education where apologetics can have its place but always attended with a warm emotional attitude. It is the opposite of what many young people experience nowadays in church. White mentioned at a different place, “One thing is certain—kindness and amiability of temper will do more to exalt him than any supposed smartness with the curse of an ungenial disposition.”<sup>82</sup> It is not about the exclusiveness of affection but about the danger of using a solely rational approach in interaction with each other and especially in the education of children and teenagers. Studies in the U.S. showed “clearly that the language that dominates U.S. adolescent interests and thinking about life, including religious and spiritual life, is primarily about personally feeling good and being happy.”<sup>83</sup> It is about to establish a balance between intellectual and emotional aspects in matters of faith and to admit that some teenagers within or outside the church are more responsive emotionally. In Germany the *Shell Jugendstudie* indicates that young people can be supported and encouraged when three factors match together: 1) Young people need room or places where they can be active, 2) they want to have personal benefits from it, and 3) the *social feeling* must be adequate.<sup>84</sup> The youth community is not accessible to an apologetic model based on a merely intellectual approach. A balanced

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<sup>81</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), 515.

<sup>82</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages Book 2* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 237.

<sup>83</sup> Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 168.

<sup>84</sup> Hurrelmann and Albert, "15. Shell Jugendstudie," accessed December 15, 2015.

approach is needed between intellect and affection to encounter young people appropriately.

### **Work of the Apologist**

One part of the task of an apologist is “to find the barriers to faith.”<sup>85</sup> These barriers, “misunderstandings, or misrepresentations”<sup>86</sup> between believer and unbelief need to be analyzed regarding whether they are rather intellectual, existential, or emotional. Very often it is a combination of intellectual and emotional aspects. For example, the question about the good God and the Evil is often not fully comprehended intellectual but at the same time connected to experiences where emotions come into play. In affectionate encounter the apologist has to address both aspects.

Very often in literature we come across something like a “battle is between faith and reason on the one side and emotion and imagination on the other.”<sup>87</sup> Clifford Williams speaks about the “antagonism between faith and emotion”<sup>88</sup> because often it is not the reason which opposes faith but emotions. As an example, he mentions C. S. Lewis who said, “it is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions.”<sup>89</sup> In conversation the introduced intellectual question might be rooted in an emotional issue. We must admit “faith often appears to consist of both belief and emotion.”<sup>90</sup> So when apologetics refer to faith,

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<sup>85</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Clifford Williams, *Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires & Emotions for Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 160.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 150.

which is twofold, and people respond to intellect and emotion, too, it should include both aspects as well. It is not about overemphasizing the emotional part but about including it in the right proportions.

## **Conclusion**

What we discovered in the former section: 1) some of the topics regarding apologetics are more or less connected with emotions, which should be recognized and addressed. 2) Sometimes intellectual topics ostensibly filling the core of argumentation, include an underlying theme of emotional nature. 3) It is hard to say that apologetics is solely an intellectual discipline. A more holistic approach includes emotional aspects that inherent in the human personality and therefore in dialog, too. 4) The education of young people should entail apologetic ideas but with a warm emotional attitude. 5) The apologist identifies the real underlying concern of people or issues and can respond accordingly.

### Between Intellectual Apologetics and Spirituality

When Peter refers in 1 Pet 3:15 to the *elpis* (eng. hope) in the apologetic creed what did he mean? He said we should be ready to *apologia* (eng. defend) the hope, which is in us. What does this hope include? In several other texts it is linked to the hope or expectation of eternal salvation, accessible through Christ (Acts 23:6; 26:7; Rom 5:4f; 12:12; 15:13; 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Pet 1:3).<sup>91</sup> Hope was not understood by the apostles as speculation or reveries, it was based on the historical events of the crucifixion and

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<sup>91</sup> Accordance electronic edition, *Thayer, Joseph H. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree Software, 2004).



resurrection of Christ.<sup>92</sup> Apologetics is therefore based on historical events that cause faith in the personal redeemer with the name: Jesus Christ. Some apologetic schools are so much focused on reason and justification by arguments that they miss the point. Halverson confirms that “many Christian apologists are almost exclusively focused on such an intellectual approach. However, we must not fail to see—and thereby to live—the end to which such answers point, namely, ‘the hope that we have’.”<sup>93</sup>

### **Relation Between Intellect and Spirituality**

The exclusion of spirituality in intellectual apologetics is caused by the discomfort that many people from outside view faith as a product of fantasy or as myth. Especially apologists oppose this assumption because they say that faith is based on logic and facts. So they can encounter people from outside in an enlightened and informed way and it lifts them on the same level of “scientific and historical investigation”.<sup>94</sup> Markos calls modern apologetics a product of “secular Enlightenment's attempt to separate faith from reason to refound everything, from philosophy to theology to ethics, on rational principles.”<sup>95</sup> But when belief may be derived only from reason why call it *belief*? If there is irrefutable evidence for faith, we do not need belief any longer. It would be called *knowledge*. Sometimes apologetics is used this way.<sup>96</sup> Geisler observes correctly “proof is no substitute for faith”<sup>97</sup>. Rather proof, reason, and arguments in apologetics are to

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<sup>92</sup> Lothar Coenen, *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Klaus Haacker (Witten: SCM R.Brockhaus, 2010), 1004.

<sup>93</sup> Halverson, “Issues and Approaches in Working with Internationals,” n.p.

<sup>94</sup> Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 23.

<sup>95</sup> Markos, *Apologetics for the Twenty-First Century*, 21.

<sup>96</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 24.

<sup>97</sup> Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 7.

augment, inform, bolster, and reinvigorate faith.<sup>98</sup> Of course, reason has limitations. It is “not possible for rational argumentation alone to make a person into (or sustain a person as) a follower of Jesus Christ.”<sup>99</sup> Holthaus calls it a danger to have disproportion in apologetics between belief and knowledge or reason.<sup>100</sup> On the one hand, faith is not only a personal matter without basic principles of reason, and on the other hand knowledge about faith without the Holy Spirit is dead faith.<sup>101</sup> The biblical doctrine of confession and repentance is a gift of God. Charles Scriven published an article in which he concludes that faith is to be seen as a gift. He explained that we “do not think our way into faith. We receive it, and it cannot be fully justified through evidential reasoning.”<sup>102</sup> But further he admits that there are some *positive analogies* “between theological and scientific reasoning.”<sup>103</sup> What does he understand by positive analogies? He answers, “These analogies involve, on the one hand, the epistemic limits of science itself; and on the other hand, believers’ openness to testing, and if necessary, adjusting, of their beliefs.”<sup>104</sup> For him evidence, fact, and scientific thinking still matter when confirming faith.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics*, 26.

<sup>100</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 74.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Charles Scriven, “Authority and Evidence: Faith and the Post-Christian Master Story,” *Spes Christiana*, 2012, 14.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

## Introduction to Faith

In John 1:45-46 we can read the story of two disciples. Philip approached Nathanael and reported that they had found the promised one who is Jesus from Nazareth. In v.46 we read that Nathanael was quite skeptical because of the village where Jesus came from. There are no arguments in the conversation but the invitation to experience it firsthand. Although there are slight differences between evangelism and apologetics<sup>106</sup> the intention is the same: to manifest faith – in proclamation or defense. Often, in apologetics the manifestation of faith or biblical world view is done under the supremacy of reason. Truth is argued – often on the basis of human arbitrariness outside the sphere of influence of God. The “danger of forms of apologetics that respond to rationalism is that they often end up importing rationalism into Christianity, rather than exporting the gospel to a rationalist culture.”<sup>107</sup> Whereas in John 4:23-24 we read that both is needed: truth and spirit. Apologetics as defenders of truth can play a key role in forming a biblical world view when its intellectual advantages are combined with the spiritual power, which is God, to manifest truth. McGrath states, “Apologetics thus has a strongly positive dimension – setting out the full attractiveness of Jesus Christ so that those outside the faith can begin to grasp why he merits such serious consideration.”<sup>108</sup> He adds the thought that apologetics can be implemented in church ministry for

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<sup>106</sup> See Geisler and Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 10.

<sup>107</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 29.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

educational manner, too, to help church members to strengthen believers.<sup>109</sup> Apologetics is a tool that can be used for unbelievers, but for believers as well. Apologetics can lead to faith and to verify the “probability of faith”<sup>110</sup> in terms of *indications* not *proof*.

### **Put Into Practice**

Another biblical example reveals an apologetic pitfall. It is the event in Athens where Paul proclaimed the Gospel to the pagan Greeks (Acts 17). White described the scene as follows:

His intellectual power commanded the respect of the learned; while his earnest, logical reasoning and the power of his oratory held the attention of all in the audience. His hearers recognized the fact that he was no novice, but was able to meet all classes with convincing arguments in support of the doctrines he taught. Thus the apostle stood undaunted, meeting his opponents on their own ground, matching logic with logic, philosophy with philosophy, eloquence with eloquence.<sup>111</sup>

Paul knew that well educated Athenians would respect philosophical speech. So he tried to adapt his style of evangelism to a more apologetic approach. He introduced their unknown God as the God of the Christians. His reasoning was based more on the intellectual to get them from where they were to where he was. In v. 32-34 we find out that the response of his speech was spilt. Some mocked him; some were interested and wanted to hear more. Finally, Paul left Athens and a few people decided to follow him. In

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<sup>109</sup> John Guest added in “The Church as the Heart and Soul of Apologetics,” in *Is Your Church Ready?: Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*, ed. Ravi K. Zacharias and Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), n.p.: The church as an institution of apologetics, given her evangelistic task, sees apologetics as an offensive weapon in the hand of each believer, so that he or she can convince unbelievers of the validity of the faith. Apologetics is not just the intellectual defense of the faith so that Christians can feel rationally justified in what they believe. Rather, it is the intellectual persuasion Christians exercise to help others come to faith.

<sup>110</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 25.

<sup>111</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 235.

this sense we can say that his apologetic approach was successful. But the story is not finished, yet. White noticed that when Paul was preaching later on in Corinth (Acts 18:1), “the apostle followed a course different from that which had marked his labors at Athens.”<sup>112</sup> Paul decided once more to change in his evangelistic behavior<sup>113</sup>, but why?

White continued:

While in the latter place, he had sought to adapt his style to the character of his audience; he had met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. As he thought of the time thus spent, and realized that his teaching in Athens had been productive of but little fruit, he decided to follow another plan of labor in Corinth in his efforts to arrest the attention of the careless and the indifferent. He determined to avoid elaborate arguments and discussions, and “not to know anything” among the Corinthians “save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” He would preach to them “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”<sup>114</sup>

The answer to the question of why Paul decided to change from his intellectual oriented to a more spiritual oriented approach is what White called the “little fruit”<sup>115</sup> or what the Bible recorded in Acts 17:33: “some men joined him and believed”. Paul’s approach of using apologetics in Athens primarily intellectual gained just a few believers. This passage is not to be understood that there is absolute no place for intellectual style, but rather that apologetics without strong connection to faith can be sometimes less effective. White concluded, “No eloquence of words, no force of argument, can convert the sinner. The power of God alone can apply the truth to the heart.”<sup>116</sup> Guest indicates that the “battle for the minds of men, women, and young people is a spiritual battle and

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 239.

not merely an intellectual one.”<sup>117</sup> Merely knowledge in apologetics is helpful but is not enough, because from the biblical perspective all humans are lost and need salvation from God.<sup>118</sup> Therefore in apologetic conversation a hint or bridge should be included that connects people with faith.

The foundation of spirituality in apologetics is the call for devotion in 1 Pet 3:15 to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (NASB). Zacharias puts it into his words: “This means the apologist’s task begins with a godly walk.”<sup>119</sup> He calls it the “lordship of Christ”<sup>120</sup> that determines the encounter – both: conversation and behavior. Beilby observes that in “our apologetic encounters, we must see ourselves as part of a process—a process in which the most important player is not us, but the Holy Spirit.”<sup>121</sup> These thoughts lead us to the divine science of prayer. For an apologetic approach that would lead to faith, prayer should be the prerequisite for successful apologetics. Beilby’s view of apologetic success is “understood as faithfulness to Jesus Christ.”<sup>122</sup>

A spiritual battle can only be fenced with the help of spiritual beings, namely God and his Angels. “Prayer is the God-given spiritual weapon that must accompany a good apologetic.”<sup>123</sup> The apologist is in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and puts his trust in God that He will do his part where the apologist does his part. Both work together like partners.<sup>124</sup> Humans cannot cause other beings to grow (neither humans, animals, nor

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<sup>117</sup> Guest, “The Church as the Heart and Soul of Apologetics,” n.p.

<sup>118</sup> Mittelberg and Hybels, *Building a Contagious Church*, 37.

<sup>119</sup> Zacharias, “Apologetics for Today,” 306.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 182.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>123</sup> Guest, “The Church as the Heart and Soul of Apologetics,” n.p.

<sup>124</sup> Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics*, 26.

plants).<sup>125</sup> They can only foster the process of growing by providing everything necessary and the climate for growth. The same principle applies in apologetics. Taylor states that “an apologist and/or evangelist cannot make a person a follower apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>126</sup> Apologetics without the “Christian view of things”<sup>127</sup> is nothing more than merely philosophy. The apologist has to experience God and has to put his counterpart in this heavenly surrounding, close to the sphere of God’s influence.

### **Work of the Apologist**

Today, people are not only farther away from biblical faith but many in the German society prevalent world views or theories contradict faith.<sup>128</sup> It is the challenge and task of apologetics the remove thinking barriers for the biblical world view.<sup>129</sup> There is no doubt that apologetics contains a strong intellectual part and that knowledge, reason, and truth are vital. But these aspects alone are not sufficient for building faith.<sup>130</sup> It seems that many people stop at churches for sightseeing and have more excitement to spare for the building than for who this building stands for. In general, people do not stop at the church entrance coincidentally and that is the reason why apologetics is essential.<sup>131</sup> It seeks to point to the content of “church buildings” by showing them that there is a good reason to believe what the Bible is teaching. Faith and reason are not “hostile to each

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics*, 153.

<sup>128</sup> Mittelberg and Hybels, *Building a Contagious Church*, 44.

<sup>129</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 23.

<sup>130</sup> For further reading about the relation between faith and reason see Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 14–15 and Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 77.

<sup>131</sup> Mittelberg and Hybels, *Building a Contagious Church*, 42.

other”<sup>132</sup>, whether in reality or within an apologetic model. An adequate approach could be that “faith and reason cooperate on a biblical view of faith.”<sup>133</sup> The aim of apologetics is not to increase people’s knowledge by using logic and reason, but to build a place where saving faith can grow. The question is how we can “help young people” to “turn their intellectual, institutional, unexpressed, and transitional doubts into something more than question”<sup>134</sup> inside and outside the church – to get them closer to Christ and to build a solid foundation of a biblical world view. The apologist can only work outside the person, but to change intrinsically we need the work of the Holy Spirit, too.<sup>135</sup> “With patience, practice, prayer, and God's grace, believers [the apologist] can offer thoughtful responses to faith-challenges.”<sup>136</sup>

## Conclusion

What we discovered in the former section: 1) the goal of apologetics is spirituality, viz. *elpis/Hope* in Christ mentioned in 1 Pet 3:15. 2) One purpose of apologetics is to make biblical faith more reliable and trustworthy. Apologetics supports faith, but does not compensate, takes faith out of the category of myths and fables where many people nowadays have put it. 3) Apologetics may show the probability of faith for believers and for unbelievers likewise. 4) When apologetics is practiced only philosophically, it is insufficient for spiritual matters. Apologetics is a spiritual approach including a strong connection with faith and can not be detached from it.

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<sup>132</sup> Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 18.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church... and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 197.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Copan, *True for You but Not for Me*, 13.



## Between Intellectual Apologetics and Practical Skills

Why should practical skills be part of an apologetic model? Because we depend on it. If apologetics remains only in our mind (intellect), without connection to our hearts (emotions) and having an effect on our lives (practically), we do not fully serve God (spiritually). In Deut 5:6 and Luk 10:27 God calls us to be devoted with everything we are. Apologetics is not merely intellectual. Peter stated in 1 Pet 3:15 that we shall defend our hope to others. That is very practical and is not only part of an academic discussion.<sup>137</sup> It is not only philosophical but has to do with relationships – with other people in our daily lives. That is why Peter gave practical advice on how to behave when we do apologetics. It shall be done “with gentleness and reverence”. Even William Lane Craig who is considered as one of the most competent Christian philosophers and apologist admitted that apologetics as primarily “theoretical discipline, though it has a practical application.”<sup>138</sup>

### **Assumptions in Regard to Practical Apologetics**

One main principle we should keep in mind when it comes to interaction with other people is, that we are all faulty and imperfect beings who are fully dependent on the creator. But because God chose to use us defending His truth it is not all about us. In the same way as He uses us we need to use His assistance and power. Without this reciprocal

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<sup>137</sup> Craig states in his book *Reasonable Faith*, 15, that he sees a connection between the science of apologetics and practical aspects like “answering questions, or debating, or evangelism” but for him it is related to apologetics but not apologetics in the proper sense. Here I want to question him. First of all, because for apologists like Jesus, Peter, and Paul, the defense of truth was not a separate intellectual discipline. It was always related to practical life. It is similar with faith. Faith without works is dead. Intellectual apologetics without application in life is dead. An apologetical model should give appropriate emphasis to the application of apologetics.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

effect apologetics is not effective. Koukl calls it the “100% God and 100% man” principle.<sup>139</sup> He explains, “I am wholly responsible for my side of the ledger, and God is entirely responsible for his. I focus on being faithful, but I trust God to be effective. Some will respond, and some will not. The results are his concern, not mine.”<sup>140</sup> We care about people and God cares about salvation. We must not to forget our limits but also chances when we interact with people.

People experienced enough militant behavior and are very sensitive to the way of communication and how they are approached. To some people apologetics means something like: “Circle the wagons. Hoist the drawbridge. Fix bayonets. Load weapons. Ready, aim, fire.”<sup>141</sup> But apologetics does not mean going into battle. We can consider it as a fighting technique to some extent but in the framework of love. It is not about hard words and defeat but about humility and kindness. When we defend God and His truth, which is in the inner core the divine love (1 John 4:8) and the law of love (v. 11-12), we have to act accordingly. White agreed and said,

The subjects which we present to the world must be to us a living reality. [...] With those who have educated themselves as debaters there is great danger that they will not handle the word of God with fairness. In meeting an opponent it should be our earnest effort to present subjects in such a manner as to awaken conviction in his mind, instead of seeking merely to give confidence to the believer.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, 7.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Gregory P. Koukl, *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview: Essays in Honor of Norman L. Geisler*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William L. Craig, and James P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>142</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1948), 708.

Of course, people may react harshly even though the apologist used all his skills in a loving way. However sometimes this may be necessary because accepting a new belief involves dropping previous beliefs, which can be a hurtful process. Apologetics is sometimes about putting a little stone in the counterpart's shoe<sup>143</sup> to leave the seed in his or her heart to grow by God's grace. But by using apologetic skills it should always be ensured "that in defending the doctrines which we consider fundamental articles of faith we should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound."<sup>144</sup> It is not about manipulation but about presenting an alternative biblical perspective to what they believe. When we succeeded only to "to silence an opponent"<sup>145</sup> but they do not "honor the truth"<sup>146</sup> we misused apologetics. Koukl notices, "In addition to the image problem, apologists face another barrier."<sup>147</sup> We mentioned before that people are very sensitive in communication. In our postmodern age it is "too easy for postmoderns to ignore our facts, deny our claims, or simply yawn and walk away from the line we have drawn in the sand."<sup>148</sup> Instead of compelling he suggested another approach that is more diplomatic and "trades more on friendly curiosity [...]– than on confrontation."<sup>149</sup>

In applying apologetics is it necessary to recognize that people are individuals and therefore behave differently. Furthermore people are "at different stages in their awareness of truth, God, and the gospel."<sup>150</sup> Later we will consider some helpful

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<sup>143</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, 39.

<sup>144</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:708.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Koukl, *To Everyone an Answer*, 47.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, n.p.

<sup>150</sup> Copan, *True for You but Not for Me*, 16.

apologetic skills, but they are not intended as something like a “one-size-fits-all”<sup>151</sup> method. The aim is to approach everyone in the way he or she is responsive.

Apologetic skills and practical training are vital for young people. Thomas agreed when saying that “teens need to learn how to engage their faith and talk about it in a mature manner.”<sup>152</sup> Young people need to grow in their faith in order to build a solid biblical world view. But also they need to be trained in other abilities like “conversation skills”<sup>153</sup> because many cannot really express their fundamental beliefs.<sup>154</sup> Thomas continues, “Teens need to practice out loud how to use biblical terminology and imagery winsomely in a conversation without sounding churchy, obnoxious, or offensive. This can be done in a variety of ways and in many different settings.”<sup>155</sup> Like “scholars, athletes, and musicians”<sup>156</sup> they need to improve their “skills, habits, and virtues in the direction in excellence in faith”<sup>157</sup>. It will enrich their lives to spread and defend truth if they learn “how to use biblical terminology and imagery winsomely in a conversation without sounding churchy, obnoxious, or offensive.”<sup>158</sup>

## **Behavior**

As already mentioned, our behavior represents our convictions and is the visible expression of our faith. A few basic rules of behavior made aware can change the outcome of personal encounter decisively. Koukl mentions a general rule that should be

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Thomas, “Challenges from Youth,” 47.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 269.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Thomas, “Challenges from Youth,” 47.

considered, “If anyone in the discussion gets angry, you lose.”<sup>159</sup> Discussion is sometimes necessary but either way, if the apologist or his counterpart gets angry the intention and goal of the conversation failed because it is about winning people, not winning arguments. 2 Tim 2:14 remind us “not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers” (NASB). Jerry Weissman agreed stating that “contentiousness is the most damaging of these behaviors because it represents loss of control”.<sup>160</sup> And in such state of the mind no guidance by the Holy Spirit is possible. To avoid such state we “must never react to tough questions with anger; instead always respond with firm, but calm resolve.”<sup>161</sup> Instead of an open exchange of views we often tend to defend ourselves as persons or to attack the other person instead of focusing on the topic. We need to tolerate people and treat them in a friendly and respecting manner. There is the danger of confusing the level of individuals with the level of issues. It is one thing to accept someone’s faith or belief in general because we tolerate him or her as an individual. It is something else to accept the entire content of someone’s faith. Both dialog partners should be aware of this distinction so they might be able to accept the opponent as person but are open for discussion on the level of issues. When we recognize that we are in danger to argue on the personal level we have to “step back”<sup>162</sup> and need to “avoid the ‘Ready, Fire, Aim!’ trap”<sup>163</sup>. How can this be achieved in the actual situation? Instead of giving a quick answer or response we should “listen for the key issue.”<sup>164</sup> For

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<sup>159</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, n.p.

<sup>160</sup> Jerry Weissman, *In the Line of Fire: How to Handle Tough Questions When It Counts* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 126.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

instance, we may ask ourselves what the core issue could be: ‘She wants to defend her atheistic world view’, or ‘He is interested in faith, but blocked by his negative emotional experiences with believers’, etc.<sup>165</sup> Weissmann explains, “Unfortunately, the key issue comes all wrapped up in a large knotty ball. One of the strands of that ball is misinformation.”<sup>166</sup>

### **Tactical Skills in Conversation**

Apologetics is the art of defending faith. The following applies: “be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16; NASB). We have to address the audience in their cultural setting the best possible – no matter if within the church or outside. Therefore, practical skills can serve as a tool to deliver the content appropriate in the right package. On the other hand, tactical moves in a conversation can help in precarious situations. We want to discuss some selected examples that can be used in encounter. They can be implemented in conversations with unbelievers and should also be part of apologetic education in youth ministry.

First, we need to realize encounters, very often offer only a brief period of time to respond or to jump on board of the conversation. According to Koukl’s experience, there are often not more than ten seconds left to take the opportunity “before the door closes”.<sup>167</sup> Such a quick response is almost impossible without former training in these skills and in theoretical apologetic concepts. This is another aspect why apologetic education is vital in church ministry.

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>167</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, n.p.

When it comes to challenging topics or difficult questions it is often helpful not to answer but to paraphrase.<sup>168</sup> Weissman explains, “By becoming one with your opponent in the paraphrase, you level the playing field.”<sup>169</sup> The conversation partner now “cannot help but concur that you have identified the issue, and therefore that person will not say with exasperation, ‘What I’m really asking...’ Instead, that person will nod in agreement and release you to move ahead with your answer.”<sup>170</sup> Next, an elementary mental process can help in such situations. Three different questions support the process properly. To react effectively, we may ask ourselves in every conversation regarding what we hear: “First, is it possible?”, “second, is it plausible?” and “third, is it probable?”<sup>171</sup> If it is still troubling to recognize the central idea another question for the opponent can help: “How did you reach that conclusion?” This gives us more time to think while he or she is explaining the issue.<sup>172</sup>

Another basic tactics is the use of *questions*, rather than *telling*. What is the difference? “Telling puts the other person down. It implies that the other person does not already know what I am telling and that the other person ought to know it.”<sup>173</sup> In order to use skillful questioning we need to listen in order to understand first. In James 1:19 we find biblical support for this idea. It is about being quick in listening and slow in speaking. But listening is not only done by our ears, but likewise with our body

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<sup>168</sup> Weissman, *In the Line of Fire: How to Handle Tough Questions When It Counts*, 55.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Koukl, *Tactics*, n.p.

<sup>172</sup> Sometimes we can observe that many of those who claim things cannot prove what they say or they do not know why they are thinking that way and so the apologist has an easy game to reveal the weak arguments and shake their foundation.

<sup>173</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Humble Inquiry the Gentle Art of Asking instead of Telling* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013), 8.

language.<sup>174</sup> Whereas asking is often considered as weakness, knowing seems to be more worthwhile.<sup>175</sup> But almost all scholars agree when it comes to asking questions – correctly placed questions have a huge impact.<sup>176</sup> They open not only the door for intellectual exchange but foster relationship, too.<sup>177</sup>

In general there are some recommendable books that can be consulted for more tactical skills.<sup>178</sup> The best compilation of skills and techniques can probably be found in the book “How to Argue Like Jesus: Learning Persuasion from History's Greatest Communicator”, by John Coleman. He presents an approach based on the rhetoric approach of Aristotle and tries to identify these skills in Jesus’ life and ministry. Interestingly, it is structured threefold: Concept Pathos, Concept Ethos, and Concept Logos. We could argue that Coleman also sees two major aspects in his model we presented in this paper (coaction of affection and intellect). First, Pathos reflects the “emotional appeal”<sup>179</sup> accomplished by means of narrative, imagery, shared values, shared personal similarities, and so forth.<sup>180</sup> The author discloses that “emotion without reason is hollow and incomplete, logic without emotion is cold and unmoving. Life

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<sup>174</sup> It is called *Visual Listening* and includes balanced stance, eye contact, head nods, voice assent, and steady fingers. See Weissman, *In the Line of Fire: How to Handle Tough Questions When It Counts*, 48.

<sup>175</sup> Schein, *Humble Inquiry the Gentle Art of Asking instead of Telling*, 58.

<sup>176</sup> Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 26.

<sup>177</sup> Schein, *Humble Inquiry the Gentle Art of Asking instead of Telling*, 9: “On the other hand, asking temporarily empowers the other person in the conversation and temporarily makes me vulnerable. It implies that the other person knows something that I need to or want to know. It draws the other person into the situation and into the driver’s seat; it enables the other person to help or hurt me and, thereby, opens the door to building a relationship.”

<sup>178</sup> To name but a few good: Weissman, *In the Line of Fire: How to Handle Tough Questions When It Counts*. Schein, *Humble Inquiry the Gentle Art of Asking instead of Telling*. Koukl, *Tactics*.

<sup>179</sup> Joe Carter and John Coleman, *How to Argue like Jesus: Learning Persuasion from History's Greatest Communicator* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), n.p.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*



without feeling is shallow and gray.” In similar manner, Ethos shows the affect in someone’s personality and is also related to affection.<sup>181</sup> It is presented as the “persuasive appeal of one’s character, especially how this character is established by means of the speech or discourse” and is vital for affectionate encounter. Second, Logos is considered as “logical appeal”<sup>182</sup> Coleman lists different skills to persuade intellectually in conversation (e.g. syllogism, enthymeme, a fortiori, reductio ad absurdum, false dilemma, appeal to evidence, and cumulative case), which Jesus used, too.<sup>183</sup> He affirms, “Almost anywhere you go, the logical consistency of your communication—your appeals to reason—will be essential to your ability to impact listeners.”<sup>184</sup> Even though he does not mention the spiritual aspect, it is obvious because his presupposition was that Jesus used these skills for spiritual goals – that is to testify salvation.

### **The Work of the Apologist**

Solely intellectual apologetics without the framework of practical implementation is biblically not intended and in everyday reality not viable. McGrath agrees, “In the end, good apologetics is all about practice [...] You can't learn apologetics by reading books or attending classes. It's a skill, not just a matter of acquiring information.”<sup>185</sup> Further,

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<sup>181</sup> In previous discussion we discovered the difference between the affect in speech and the affect in relationship. Both can be part of affectionate apologetics. Pathos is referring more to the affectionate speech and Ethos more to the affectionate interpersonal encounter that is important to overcome emotional obstacles in conversation.

<sup>182</sup> Carter and Coleman, *How to Argue like Jesus*, n.p.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 184.

McGrath disagrees with Craig's view of apologetics, which is theoretically nature<sup>186</sup>, and continues stating,

apologetics is not just theory; it's about practice. [...] Apologetics is both a science and an art. It is not just about knowledge; it is about wisdom. It's like a skilled and experienced medical practitioner, who knows the theory of medicine well. But she has to apply it to their patients, and that means learning how to relate to them – how to help them tell her what the real problems are, finding ways of communicating technical medical terms in ordinary language, and explaining how they can be addressed.<sup>187</sup>

It is not even in the practical application of apologetics, appearance, behavior, techniques, and skills, the three main aspects of comprehensive apologetics emerge – namely intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects. Skills support the transmission of apologetic information; it is like the packaging for commodities. Apologetic speaking is not enough; it is also about how to speak. Skills can be used in conversation but should be integrated as the last aspect in comprehensive apologetics. These skills need teachers who educate others in this domain and needs “practice and preparation”<sup>188</sup> to improve and adapt it more and more.

## **Conclusion**

What we discovered in the former section: 1) apologetics consists of an interplay between rational and practical aspects. It is not only philosophically, but in the end it is also about relationships. 2) In practice apologetics is divided into the field of action of men and God and is about loving encounter, not controversy. Apologetics works responsively towards people. The use of skills should help young people to express their

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<sup>186</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 15.

<sup>187</sup> McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 38.

<sup>188</sup> Weissman, *In the Line of Fire: How to Handle Tough Questions When It Counts*, 116.

beliefs. 3) First, practical skills are the package of apologetic ideas and functions as transmitter of the message. Second, they may help in precarious situations to react appropriately and effectively.

### Introducing Comprehensive Apologetics as Model

A systematic model needs to be comprehensive. In reference to the previous sections and based on the four aspects of apologetics (intellect, affection, spirituality, and practical skills), the following chart summarizes what we discussed so far:

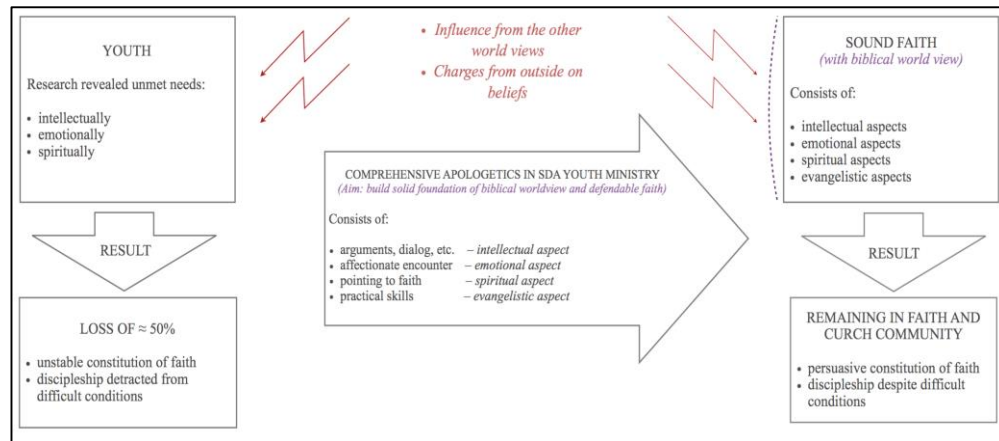


Figure 2. Graphic of comprehensive apologetics.

### Constitution of Youth

Starting point was the status quo and constitution of the youth regarding faith in the U.S., Europe and especially in Germany. A number of studies have shown that during the teenage years and twenties young adults decide whether they keep the faith and stay in church. During these years of education in secondary schools and university and often the move from their parents' home show if they were able to form a solid biblical world

view that can cope with the challenges they experience. Further, research revealed that many young people have intellectually emotionally and spiritually unmet needs which keep them from shaping their biblical world view. The tragic consequence is obvious in terms of statistics that show about 50% of young Christians and so Adventists, too, leaving behind their faith and adapting to secular circumstances.

### Comprehensive Apologetics

The youth department of the Adventist church in Germany needs to think about the current situation and should find ways to counteract the de-conversion of young people. This paper showed that a comprehensive approach of apologetics in youth ministry could help to build a sound faith and a defensible biblical world view among young adults that is able to carry them through their lives. It consists of arguments and dialog, affectionate encounter, pointing to faith and practical skills.

### The Process of Applied Comprehensive Apologetics

The goal of comprehensive apologetics is twofold. First, it needs to be implemented in Adventist education and ministry. In order to do that ministers are to be taught in these issues. Comprehensive apologetics in the Adventist educational system is to foster a biblical world view as explained. Second, comprehensive apologetics can help young people to build solid faith and in consequence they stay in church and help to spread and witness the Gospel to their environment. They should be able to use the principles of comprehensive apologetics that helped them for others (believer or non-believer) to find the way of salvation. The process may be shown graphically as follows:



Figure 3. Graphic of process of applied comprehensive apologetics.

The next section is intended as thematic discussion how to apply the process of educating comprehensive apologetics in the Adventist educational system and youth ministry.

## CHAPTER 4

### HOW DO WE TEACH TRUTH?

This chapter is focused on how *Comprehensive Apologetics* can find its way into youth ministry, practically. The education in truth, meaning biblical truth, within the Christian society must change with the shift of secular society. Before the dawn of the age of enlightenment Western society was much more permeated by Christianity and church had more influence on public life. It was enough to educate young people in biblical truth without apologetic foundation. Christianity was not considered as bizarre or disconcerting, rather there was much room for it. Today the German society is getting more and more agnostic, atheistic, and different influences from Far East are shaping diverse world views. To be committed to Christianity is often viewed as having fallen for fables. Unconsciously, the biblical truth is recognized as not viable. As became apparent in the former sections, however, it is vital for young people to develop a firm biblical world view to be prepared to oppose secular ideas and show to others that the biblical world view is the better alternative to vital questions in life. This section is dedicated to point to the direction where we may accomplish an apologetic education in youth ministry. It deals with what is necessary and what can be done in order to achieve a comprehensive apologetic education.

## Decisive Precondition

In order to implement a comprehensive apologetic education in youth ministry there is one important aspect necessary to accomplish what is intended. As simple as it may sound such apologetic training cannot exist and arise if there are no ministers trained and educated in Bible studies, expertise, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Thomas agreed, “We cannot give to young people what we adults do not possess. In order to equip them, we ourselves have to be prepared in word and deed.”<sup>2</sup> However, in general, from where do the ministers get their theological education? It is the seminary or university. But apologetic departments in German theological universities are nearly non-existent. The critical voice of Craig and Moreland addresses the issue in the U.S.: “[...] the average Bible college has no philosophy department, and many evangelical seminaries do not offer serious, formal training in philosophy and apologetics beyond a course here and there.”<sup>3</sup> Still, it implicates that there are few and the “Top 10 graduate programs in Christian apologetics”<sup>4</sup> are all found in the United States.<sup>5</sup> In Europe there is only the *Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics*. But in Germany not one Seminary or University is known for a sound apologetic education. German ministers who want to become educated in apologetics have to think about the possibilities of studying abroad or to use

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<sup>1</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 25. When the term philosophy is mentioned in this chapter the pitfall of philosophy, which leans primarily on human abilities instead of the cooperation with God’s influence, is still calling for attention. If humans think their competence in spiritual matters is sufficient when using apologetics, the story of Paul in Athens can warn of such an attitude. Rather if philosophy is used in education or conversation, subject to God, it may support education in a biblical world view for people who are more rational.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, “Challenges from Youth,” 51.

<sup>3</sup> Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> “The Top 10 Graduate Programs in Christian Apologetics,” *The Best Schools*, n.d.

<sup>5</sup> Another good program and example for successful apologetical training is offered by Summit Ministries.

the Internet or books for self-study<sup>6</sup>. And the church may support them financially and professionally because they to realize that the youth is the “church of tomorrow”.<sup>7</sup> They should employ their ministers not only based on their professional skills but should also focus on the spiritual condition of the ministers because healthy youth ministry needs healthy ministers.<sup>8</sup>

### **Inclusive Environment**

Young people have a past, story to tell and a home that shaped their views and personalities. The church cannot replace the influence and education of the parents. In general, the family remains the most decisive part in their education. This means that it is the churches’ responsibility not only to work in their local sphere of influence, but also to try to encourage and support the parents to join the endeavors and collaborate in the process. William Wilberforce “ saw the value of philosophy and apologetics even for the training of children in the church.”<sup>9</sup> He stated, “In an age in which infidelity abounds, do we observe [believers] carefully instructing their children in the principles of faith they profess? Or do they furnish their children with arguments for the defense of that faith?”<sup>10</sup> God intended the parents to take on the education of children. The biblical concept is not about outsourcing education to schools, churches, or other institutions. It is still primarily

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<sup>6</sup> Many options and offer are accessible through Internet. James Klopfenstein listed different possibilities for self-study in “How to Get Apologetics in Your Church 2: An Effective Model for a Youth Apologetics Home Group,” *Apologetics* 315, n.d.

<sup>7</sup> Schulze, “Key Factors of Faith Development,” 7.

<sup>8</sup> Doug Fields, *Jugendarbeit mit Vision: 9 Schritte zu einer lebendigen Jugendarbeit* (Asslar: Projektion J, 2000), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982), 1–2, quoted in Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 18.



the main task of parents, but can be supported by the mentioned educational systems. The church may collaborate with the parents and offer apologetic training and education in addition. Later we will discuss the didactics of education in biblical truth. Parents need to rethink their style of religious education. In his book, Craig mentions the danger of today's education, saying that the children are being so much confused and affronted by what they hear and learn in school (e.g. relativism or battle of world views) that it is not enough to just continue with Bible stories from the children's Bible (though vital without question) but they also need "good answers"<sup>11</sup> to their questions and comprehensive apologetic education.<sup>12</sup> However it starts with the parents; "If parents are not intellectually committed to their faith and do not have sound arguments for Christian theism"<sup>13</sup> they are not able to teach their children.

### **Learning From Role Models**

Biblical education has to start with oneself as Timothy said in 1 Tim 4:16, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." (NASB). The same idea is also found in the Old Testament in Deut 6:5-9: With all we are, loving God and keeping his word in our hearts. This is the precondition of biblical education. The next step is to convey our attitude, wisdom, and knowledge to our children (v. 7). When teaching comprehensive apologetics, it is essential to be a model of apologetic lifestyle. It is of paramount importance to live according to our knowledge. Thomas calls

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<sup>11</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

it the “greatest obstacle”<sup>14</sup> for people who are interested in faith to see other people who claim to know the way of salvation and who are defenders of biblical values and in the same time they fail living it out. Holthaus explains that in 1 Pet 3:15 the reference to a credible Christian lifestyle is made.<sup>15</sup> The exemplary function in education is noteworthy since Jesus himself used primarily “relationships and friendships”<sup>16</sup> in order to influence his disciples. Humans need other humans for self-reflection and personal development.<sup>17</sup> Apologetic training and education in the biblical sense is never only based on reason or arguments. It is also a matter of character. Frank Hasel notes, “In many ways, Adventist education has been oriented more toward equipping its students with professional skills rather than developing their character.”<sup>18</sup> The same applies for education in apologetic skills. McDowell has expressed the main idea: “We must lovingly train young people to be able to defend their faith with confidence and authority.”<sup>19</sup> The balance between the affectionate way of educating and intellectual content must address the heart and the mind. And it should be mirrored and reflected by the teacher’s character and personality. Young people desire to find passionate and affectionate mentors in the church but are often disappointed by the contrary reality in many churches.<sup>20</sup> This fact should not discourage but call and inspire for the better, to lay emphasis on the important concept of role models in church. The theological foundation for the principle of role models can be

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas, “Challenges from Youth,” 53.

<sup>15</sup> Holthaus, *Apologetik eine Einführung in die Verteidigung des christlichen Glaubens*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 208.

<sup>17</sup> Mittelberg and Hybels, *Building a Contagious Church*, 77.

<sup>18</sup> Frank M. Hasel, “Passing on What Really Counts: Transmitting Adventist Values and Beliefs and a Spirit of Service and Mission,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* (March 2006): 17.

<sup>19</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

<sup>20</sup> Lindsley, *Love, the Ultimate Apologetic*, 25.

derived from Paul's advice for elders in the church in Tit 1:9. The elder has to bear a godly personality and work two things: first, he has to exhort and to encourage; second, he has to defend the word of God against contradictory standards and opposing concepts. Of course, it is not only the elders who are called upon the mentioned responsibility in Tit 1:9. People who are in charge of positions of responsibility must pay particular attention but all regular members in the church should strive for the highest ideal. Young people must find such persons in church where they can be inspired and learn willingly.

### **Didactic Implementation**

Apologetic education can take place under various circumstances. Apologetic thoughts can be included in sermons or in Sabbath school lessons. They can find their way into religion classes or youth meetings, Friday night meetings and special Sabbath afternoon presentations. They can be part of Bible lessons, youth conferences or personal encounters and conversations. The question arises in which way apologetic education should take place. This section is about several proper and basic didactic methods. Of course, each situation requires adaption and appropriate action. The following approaches, methods or principles are options to develop something that meets the needs of his or her situation. There are always various options and it is not about the only right solution. The main question has been expressed by Sigg while he was presenting the outcomes of the ValueGenesis study among young people, "How do we convey Adventist doctrine as present truth?"<sup>21</sup> Hasel describes in his article that truth is the

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<sup>21</sup> Freikirche der Siebenten-Tags Adventisten, Nord- und Süddeutscher Verband, and Stephan Sigg, "Zusammenfassung Valuegenesis Europe."

foundation of spiritual growth.<sup>22</sup> Through comprehensive apologetic education in biblical and philosophical matter young people can grow spiritually.

In general, I suggest following the approach presented by Zacharias in his book *Is your church ready?*, which seems to be very effective and affirms our findings of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects in *Comprehensive Apologetics* combined with *practical skills*. In his book he introduced his approach consisting of three levels: 1) logic, 2) feelings, and 3) application:

Level #3 Kitchen-table conclusions	Why one legislates for the other	Is it transferable?	Application
Level #2 Imagination and feeling	Why one lives	Is it livable?	Illustration
Level #1 Foundation of logic	Why one believes	Is it tenable?	Argumentation

Figure 4. Levels of philosophy.

It covers directly and indirectly the whole range of aspects of *comprehensive apologetics*. In addition, the ultimate goal of Zacharias’ approach called *Levels of Philosophy* and *Comprehensive Apologetics* is the same: forming a biblical world view and fostering spirituality. Zacharias summarizes, “Here is the key: One must argue from level one, illustrate from level two, and apply at level three. Life must move from truth to

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<sup>22</sup> Frank M. Hasel, “Passing on What Really Counts: Transmitting Adventist Values and Beliefs and a Spirit of Service and Mission,” 21.

experience to prescription.”<sup>23</sup> In the following, we will see how we can use his approach in apologetic education. The section will be divided into three main topics. These topics are not necessarily the appropriate order for every situation but can be seen as red thread for orientation. Again, adaptation is essential because all occurrences are unique and there is no all-in-one procedure. Furthermore, details like prayer or loving behavior are taken for granted as discussed earlier in this paper.

### Level One – Intellect

Zacharias describes the first level as follows, “Level one states why we believe what we believe [...]”<sup>24</sup> Or in other words, “Can I defend what I believe in keeping with the laws of logic? That is, is it tenable?”<sup>25</sup> Especially for those teenagers who have been raised as Adventists it is sometimes impossible to justify their beliefs. Kinnaman agrees explaining they found out that teenagers struggle “to produce a lasting faith is because they are not being taught to think.”<sup>26</sup> Bobby Conway experienced that in general most people cannot really express and reason their convictions very well.<sup>27</sup> But if they meet an atheist, for example, who knows why he or she does not believe in the existence of God, uninformed believers will struggle to present their view maturely and convincingly.<sup>28</sup> The same happens in school or university where they often teach atheistic ideas, like the theory of evolution. On the first level it is necessary to work through the process of

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<sup>23</sup> Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leaders,” n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 81.

<sup>27</sup> Bobby Conway, *The Fifth Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2014), n.p.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

getting the youth to the point that they can express and justify their belief and, on the other hand, also know why they believe what they believe.

Joe Boot describes the inner core of the issue, “At the heart of knowing how to choose between competing stories lie fundamental questions: Which faith leads to understanding? Which faith gives us a view of the world that makes sense of and justifies our experience? Which faith teaches us the truth that will set us free?”<sup>29</sup> When we talk to young people we do not need to use philosophical terms and language. It is necessary to “translate your own thoughts into uneducated language.”<sup>30</sup> When they can internalize the concepts and are able to repeat the learned; when complex and abstract things are explained and described in simple words – it indicates that understanding led the way. McDowell suggests that developing skills in critical thinking might be helpful for teens.<sup>31</sup> There is lots of materials that may help here to deal more intensely with this subject.<sup>32</sup> The intellectual level may deal with things like “exposing inadequate justifications for beliefs”<sup>33</sup> or providing adequate and compelling reasons and evidence for faith.<sup>34</sup> Further, McDowell also observes that using questions is more effective in working with teens than “preaching or lectures.”<sup>35</sup> So they really have to deal with the issues and adapt critical thinking in well conducted conversations. Sometimes it can be helpful to challenge young

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<sup>29</sup> Joe Boot, “Broader Cultural and Philosophical Challenges,” in *Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith That We Defend*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 157–158.

<sup>30</sup> C. S. Lewis and Lesley Walmsley, *C.S. Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 155 quoted in McGrath, *Mere Apologetics*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

<sup>32</sup> For example, one recommendation at this point is the book *Tactics* by Gregory Koukl. It is most suitable for young people to develop skills and experience training. For further reading and other sources see the reference list at the end of this paper.

<sup>33</sup> Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, n.p.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

people with provocative statements or questions. They should rather hear and discuss them in a safe environment than be asked to answer suddenly by unbelievers.

### Level Two – Emotions

On the second level the emotions are concerned. Zacharias describes as follows, “level two indicates why we live the way we live.”<sup>36</sup> Or to put it in another way, “If everyone gave himself or herself the prerogatives of my philosophy, could there be harmony in existence? That is, is it livable?”<sup>37</sup> Imagination and feeling are to be referenced, preferably through illustrations. Jesus himself used illustrations a lot to teach universal and spiritual truth. Today, teenagers spend many hours in front of screens consuming media. McDowell asked legitimately why not to use such illustrative tools within apologetic education.<sup>38</sup> He described, “I try to incorporate a media example nearly every time I teach youth. Film clips and song lyrics are great springboards for discussion and thoughtful reflection on issues pertaining to God and society.”<sup>39</sup> It is not the theory alone that we internalize so much but we know which “speeches, songs, pictures, or movies [...] moved us.”<sup>40</sup> These elements that are intertwined with our emotions “give us a fuller picture of the reasons to act on information, encourage us to stand by principle, and add dimension and life to cold fact.”<sup>41</sup> C.S. Lewis was famous for being an illustrative apologist. Comprehensive apologetic education can happen creatively.

Another example of apologetics and social media is the *oneminuteapologist* on YouTube.

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<sup>36</sup> Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leaders,” n.p.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Carter and Coleman, *How to Argue like Jesus*, n.p.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Since 2009 Bobby Conway has regularly released short clips with apologetic content for ordinary people. He interviews different apologists to curious questions and has more than 2.5 million hits. Of course, such creative and illustrative way of education bears the risk that it stays superficial without studying those questions in depth and applying the thoughts in current situation. Craig points to the issue and warns that “entertainment and simpering devotional thoughts” are insufficient and “we dare not send them out to public high school and university armed with rubber swords and plastic armor. The time for playing games is past.”<sup>42</sup> Nowadays various illustrative apologetic work material and collections are freely accessible online.<sup>43</sup>

### Level Three – Application

The last and indispensable level touches the lives of the young people directly. Zacharias noted that the third level “states why we legislate for others that way we do.” It means that we have to ask, “Do I have a right to make moral judgments in the matters of daily living? That is, is it transferable?”<sup>44</sup> Without such application of the theoretical part apologetics is ineffective and worthless.<sup>45</sup> In particular many scenarios can be carried out under supervision as examples for training purpose. The theoretical part has to find its purpose in the lives of the youth. In order to transport apologetic ideas into practical life, young people have to “construct bridges” between different layer of cognitive

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<sup>42</sup> Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> James Klopfenstein, “How to Get Apologetics in Your Church 2: An Effective Model for a Youth Apologetics Home Group”

<sup>44</sup> Zacharias, “Four Challenges for Church Leaders,” n.p.

<sup>45</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation*, n.p.



processes.<sup>46</sup> Chap Clark researched that young people often do not have the ability of putting together different aspects into one big picture.<sup>47</sup> By using examples from daily living and connecting it with theory they might be able to construct these synaptic bridges and might access them again when they experience similar circumstances.

### Conclusion

By using intellect and logic we try to communicate the foundation of faith – that is our biblical world view. Intensified by illustrative aspects that addresses the emotions young people can be educated in apologetic issues. To put everything into practice concludes the learning process. It is about becoming reflective about what we experience and what challenges our faith.

In occasions like sermons, Sabbath school lessons, religion classes, youth meetings, Friday night meetings, special Sabbath afternoon presentations, Bible lessons, youth conferences, or personal encounters and conversations the following is valid: we have to admit that every person is different in their experience, development, and personality. Therefore, it is tremendous to integrate all parts (argumentation/intellect, imagination/emotions, and application for daily life). The attempt and effort to establish a culture of apologetic education in the church will provide significant enrichment for the lives of the young people and youth ministry

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<sup>46</sup> Chap Clark, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 20.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It was the purpose of the present study to examine the current condition of young adults in Christian and more specific in the Adventist community and to see if applied apologetics could impact the spiritual life beneficially. Expressed more precisely, this study tried to see if a comprehensive and biblically based approach to apologetics could meet the needs of young people and counteract the process of de-conversion in secular environments by fostering a solid basis of faith, namely a biblical world view. The results and implications of this study will be presented in this last section.

### **Chapter 2**

#### Constitution of Spirituality Among Youth

In the first chapter the analysis of accessible data was of prime importance. Statistical research has been carried out in the United States and Europe that indicates a loss of identification among young Christians regarding their biblical world view. Even when different studies release slightly different numbers, it leads to a consistent overall image: the most conspicuous consequence of the loss of biblical world view is the de-conversion rate of around 50% of young people until the age of 35. It happens during the time of education when they often change their lifestyle in the transition from child to adult. Different factors are involved like moving from their past home to a new spot

because of attendance of university or internship. But the most significant change happens mentally when their existing world view is confronted by critical and opposing ideas, especially in education institutions.

### Why Apologetics?

The mentioned statistics and the fact that biblically based convictions of young people are in such a way challenged and attacked in the time of education at schools and universities, demands to reconsider Adventist youth ministry in the area of education. Several factors support the idea of apologetic education in church institutions: 1. Apologetics is able to meet the primary intellectual but also emotional and spiritual needs of young people. 2. Apologetics may foster a solid foundation of faith which is substantial because today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the youth has to defy their convictions against opposing and postmodern world views. 3. Young people are often educated by secular institutions and therefore confronted by atheistic, naturalistic relativistic, and humanistic ideas. If the church does not spent effort on apologetic education that deals with such issues a one-sided burden appears that might be a factor in the process of de-conversion. Here, apologetics can achieve its aim to defend faith and to make it viable, despite of other propagated ideologies.

## Chapter 3

### Comprehensive Apologetics

When categorizing individual needs, several patterns occurred and it was possible to structure these needs into three categories: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. Especially for intellectual aspects, the value of apologetics is obvious. However

traditionally apologetics was based almost exclusively on reason and tried to defend the biblical world view among other opposing philosophies. In the second chapter the discussion raised whether or not apologetics includes emotional aspects as well. Different scholars and apologetic theology referring to 1 Pet 3:15 support that it does contain *emotional aspects* and should be considered more comprehensively than merely intellectually (whereas the emphasis could still remain on the intellectual part).

### **Emotional Aspect**

The following arguments support a more comprehensive approach of apologetics:

1. The Bible itself suggests in 1 Pet 3:15 that emotions or affectionate behavior is correlated with apologetics. The words “with gentleness and reverence” (NASB) foreshadow the practical side of apologetics. 2. Unbelief is not just a matter of unsatisfied intellectual needs but is connected to hidden psychological issues, sometimes expressed in intellectual questions or criticism. Only truth accompanied with affectionate encounter as advised by apostle Peter is appropriate to deal with critical voices. 3. The inflexibility and one-sided emphasis on reason falls short because of the several levels of human personality. Whether people tend to be more intellectual or emotional, both parties own the cerebral hemisphere consisting of the left (rational logic) and right (perception of feelings) hemisphere. Especially in the process of decision-making both elements play a specific role.

### **Spiritual Aspect**

Furthermore, we noticed that apologetics is too often shielded from spiritual influences. The ultimate aim of apologetics is to defend the hope of Christ (1 Pet 3:15),

which is clear spiritual formation. The work of apologetics aims at *spirituality* and this purpose should not be confused with knowledge, superiority in discussion, or profane recognition by the community, demonstrating faith as equal or superior to other world views. The following reasons may clarify this point: 1. Spirituality is not derived from reason, but reason belongs to spirituality. According to the definition of faith that is used in this study, faith is a gift conveyed by the Holy Spirit. The work of the apologetics is not to create faith, but to defend faith by bolstering, strengthening, and reinvigorate it. 2. Apologetics may introduce faith. The link between apologetics and spirituality is the same as in evangelism. The apologetic proclamation or defense of the biblical world view to people outside or within the church wants to manifest faith. 3. Apologetics without the connection to spiritual matters misses the aim. Only a spiritual being, which is God himself, creates true spirituality among people. The events that happened when Paul was using apologetics in Athens show clearly that human reasoning alone would fail. Devotion to God forms the basis of biblical apologetics and is mentioned in 1 Pet 3:15 with the words “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (NASB). Apologetics is part of the spiritual battle where supernatural beings are involved (Eph 6:12). Prayer and trust in God’s power accompanies apologetics when practiced.

### **Evangelistic Aspect**

Another aspect that is included in comprehensive apologetics is *practical skills* because apologetics was never intended to be a theoretical discipline, practiced at university by scholars only. Instead, it is part of daily life and occurs in relationships. The Bible itself intended apologetics to be practical: according to 1 Pet 3:15, Christians should be ready to take responsibility for their faith *to other people*. Jesus once stated,

“be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16; NASB). This means that in encounter young people may be educated to communicate in a loving behavior but still are able to lead conversation wisely. Especially when it comes to education of apologetics young people need tools to represent their faith in a mature way. The skill of defending faith practically requires training and acquisition of specific tools in the field of communication, behavior, and thinking.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Application of Comprehensive Apologetics**

In various church institutions comprehensive apologetics may find implementation. It is recommended to offer such education from the beginning of the adolescence because this is the time when their biblical world view is being challenged by several other secular ideas. Further, as studies show the old-fashioned method of “that’s how it is, you have to believe it”, misses the need of young people who deeply struggle to accept the biblical world view as truth. Rather, sincere grappling with fundamental questions of life, in the time of developing one’s own identity must be responded with mature concepts of didactics. As the word “comprehensive” suggests, the didactic approach in this study passes three levels:

1. Argumentation: logical communication provides the fundament of truth in discussion and primarily focuses on the intellectual element.

2. Illustration: here, emotions and imagination can be addressed to make the abstract more accessible and understandable. Illustrations that address the emotional aspect may support the phase of decision making in spiritual matters.

3. Application: the practical part consolidates the learned and provides an opportunity for reflection. When young people practice comprehensive apologetic behavior themselves, others in their surroundings may benefit from it and are encouraged to cope with a mature biblical world view, too.

### **Implications of the Study**

From this study, concerning the potential impact of comprehensive apologetic education in church ministry, several valuable lessons can be derived.

First, the spiritual condition of young people needs special attention to see where they are challenged in their secular environment and how to deal with their needs.

Second, the de-conversion rate of young people alarmingly shows that reevaluation and reconsideration of youth ministry is urgently needed.

Third, a more comprehensive approach of apologetics might cover needs of young people which have previously been unmet.

Fourth, effective apologetics is orientated to the target group and covers intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components but emphasizes the features that are most fruitful.

Fifth, the church may discuss if they want to invest in future apologetic education by offering their youth workers apologetic education first.

Sixth, as the education of young people is valuable work, only capable and spiritual-minded ministers should perform this work.

Seventh, regardless of the exact implementation, apologetics always needs to aim at spiritual matters and cannot be isolated from the work of the Holy Spirit.

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