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## What Apologia of Christianity Does Contemporary Europe Need?

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to answer the question: What kind of apologia of Christianity does modern Europe need? In the first part, the author, using the analytical method, refers to the works of three apologists (A. E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse) and shows by their example how to practice apologia in the modern European context. The second, synthetic part is a presentation of the key features of apologia that should characterize the current defense of Christianity. The analyses carried out allow us to draw the following conclusions: first, modern apologists in their works show the topicality of apologetics, their analyses are primarily concerned with methodological issues. They pay attention not so much to the content that apologetic justification should contain, but are concerned with the form that modern apologetics should take; secondly, the apologists in question evidently link the issue of defending Christianity with evangelization. This is because they believe that apologetics plays an essential role during the preaching of the kerygma. The proclamation of the Gospel, its presentation, in order to be effective, must be combined with apologetics; finally, the most essential features of the modern defense, which remain necessary in the contemporary European context, are contextuality, supra-confessionalism, dialogicality, rationality, and cultural orientation.

**Keywords:** apologia, apologetics, Christianity, Europe, context, rationality, culture, trans-confessionalism, dialogicality, A. E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse, T. Halik, Ch. Delsol, T. P. Terlikowski, Pope Francis

## Introduction

The context in which Christianity finds itself today, including in Europe, does not seem to inspire optimism. Tomáš Halík, a Czech theologian and insightful researcher of ecclesiastical reality, notes that “the situation of the Catholic Church today in many respects resembles the time before the Reformation.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, any reform, in his opinion, “cannot remain at the level of changes in institutional structures and a few paragraphs in the catechism, code of canon law or moral textbooks. The effectiveness of the reform and the vitality of the Church depend on reaching once again the spiritual depth and existential dimension of faith.”<sup>2</sup>

French philosopher Chantal Delsol, in her famous lecture “The End of the Christian World,” rallies that the twilight of a civilization that is sixteen centuries old is looming. “I believe,” she states, “that we should understand the moment we are living in as a revolution in the strict sense, that is, as a turning of the wheel, both in the area of morality and ontology. Since the second half of the 20th century, and especially since the 1960s, our moral hierarchies have literally reversed. Within a few years, with regard to the behavior of individuals and social acts, evil not infrequently became good, and vice versa, once-rejected patterns are now praised, while former ideals are questioned.”<sup>3</sup>

Tomasz P. Terlikowski, in turn, notes that very difficult times have come for the Church. “A thoroughly secularized society does not even want to hear about God, although there are still communities and individuals who want to preach Him.”<sup>4</sup> According to the Polish columnist, the changes are not only due to ineffective preaching of the Gospel, hypocrisy of Christians or sex scandals. Rather, it is about something far deeper. Terlikowski suggests a revision of thinking and feeling, a philosophical and ideological revolution taking place in the modern world. Here the commentator invokes the term of Marcin Kędzierski, who calls the whole phenomenon “the disintegration of the Catholic *imaginarium*.”<sup>5</sup>

Recognizing the contemporary context in which Christians come to live and act, according to Pope Francis, must be a special kind of discernment. “Today [stresses the Bishop of Rome in the Apostolic Exhortation

<sup>1</sup> T. HALÍK: *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa. Odwaga do zmiany*. Trans. T. MAĆKOWIAK. Kraków 2022, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pp. 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> CH. DELSON: “Koniec chrześcijańskiego świata.” Trans. M. SZCZUROWSKI. In: *Myśląc z Janem Pawłem II*. Ed. D. KARŁOWICZ. Rzym—Warszawa 2021, pp. 178–179.

<sup>4</sup> T. P. TERLIKOWSKI: *Koniec Kościoła, jaki znacie*. Warszawa 2022, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in ibidem.

*Evangelii gaudium*], it is customary to speak of ‘diagnostic exaggeration’, which is not always accompanied by conclusive decisions that can be applied.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it would be appropriate to walk “rather on the line of evangelical discernment. It is the outlook of a missionary disciple, ‘animated by the light and power of the Holy Spirit’.”<sup>7</sup> In studying the signs of the times, one must be particularly sensitive. “It is a matter of grave responsibility, as if some aspects of the present reality do not find the right solutions, they may give rise to processes of dehumanization from which it will not be easy to withdraw later. It is appropriate to clarify what can be the fruit of the Kingdom, as well as what opposes God’s intentions. This presupposes not only recognizing and interpreting the stirrings of the good spirit and the evil spirit, but — and this is decisive — choosing the stirrings of the good spirit and rejecting those from the evil spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

How to practice apologia in such a context, and what kind of apologia of Christianity does contemporary Europe need?<sup>9</sup> The search for answers to both questions will constitute the content of the article. In the first part, using the analytical method, I will refer to the works of three apologists (A. E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse) and show on their example how to practice apologia in the modern European context. The second, synthetic part will be a presentation of the key features of apologia that should characterize the current defense of Christianity.

By apologia we will mean an intellectual and practical defense of Euro-Atlantic civilization, carried out in the current context of the time, founded on “the Christian concept of the human person, respect for human rights, recognition of the natural difference between the sexes, the unquestionability of marriage between a man and a woman and the family they created, and respect for the supreme value of human life from conception to natural death.”<sup>10</sup> Modern apologia, called the new apologia,

<sup>6</sup> FRANCIS: *Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii gaudium”* (24.11.2013), no. 50.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, no. 51.

<sup>9</sup> On the contemporary defense of Christianity, see *Bronić czy dialogować? O pewnym dylemacie chrześcijaństwa dzisiaj*. Eds. H. SEWERYNIAK, P. ARTEMIUK. Płock 2016; P. ARTEMIUK: *Renesans apologii*. Płock 2016; P. ARTEMIUK: *W obronie sprawy najważniejszych. Szkice o apologii*. Poznań 2019; P. ARTEMIUK: “Nurty współczesnej apologii.” *Studia Theologica Varsoviensia* 1 (2020), pp. 10—45; P. ARTEMIUK: “Obrona chrześcijaństwa dzisiaj: kierunki i metody współczesnej apologetyki.” *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 34/2 (2021), pp. 7—24; *Nowa apologia. Co, wobec kogo i jak bronimy?* Ed. P. ARTEMIUK. Płock 2020; H. SEWERYNIAK: “Apologia wiary i nowa ewangelizacja.” *Communio* 185 (2014), pp. 5—20; H. SEWERYNIAK: *Apologia i dziennikarstwo*. Warszawa 2018; H. SEWERYNIAK: “Teologia fundamentalna i renesans apologii.” In: *Nowa apologia. Co, wobec kogo i jak bronimy?* Ed. P. ARTEMIUK. Płock 2020, pp. 9—26.

<sup>10</sup> H. SEWERYNIAK: *Apologia i dziennikarstwo...*, p. 16.

wants to save man by defending his identity, argues for the meaning of Christianity's presence in the world and, while grappling with the charges against Christ's faith, provides the rationale for it. In carrying out its own mission, it goes decisively beyond the typically religious space and moves perfectly also in "secular" reality. In this way, it becomes a broader current, trans-confessional or non-denominational, but it always treats Catholicism as its source, its life-giving ground, appearing in the horizon of justification. The main task of the new apologia invariably remains the defense of the supernatural character of Christian revelation in the current context, but also the clear discernment of this context. In carrying out its own mission, it formulates rationales in the face of accusations coming from outside (apologia *ad extra*) and seeks the necessary arguments so that its own certainty of faith can be built up (apologia *ad intra*).

Apologetics, on the other hand, takes the form of deepening and systematizing reflection on apologies. In the course of the procedures, it wants to organize the apologetic argumentation born in haste, subjecting it to analysis in order to develop a methodical interpretation. This is also how Władysław Hładowski defined the difference between apologia and apologetics. In Christian literature, he argued, "the term apologia usually meant a defense of a particular truth or person, or a defense of religion from a particular angle of view, in the face of accusations. Apologetics, on the other hand, was always understood as a systematized defense of the Christian religion or a theory of defense giving its principles."<sup>11</sup>

Apologia and apologetics, having different shades of meaning, differ, but there is also transitivity between them. For it is impossible to do apologetics without apologia, for where to take the content of the rationale and subject it to systematization? It is also impossible to create apologia without being aware of the strength of arguments and their systematization. The transition from apologia to apologetics seems to be natural.

## What apologia?

How to practice apologia in the contemporary European context? Let us refer to the intuitions of the most important contemporary apologists.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> W. HŁADOWSKI: *Zarys apologetyki. Analiza chrześcijańskiej refleksji nad wiarygodnością objawienia*. Warszawa 1980, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> In this section of the article I refer to my text "Odcienie współczesnej apologetyki." *Studia Elbląskie* 23 (2022), pp. 299—318.

According to Alister E. McGrath,<sup>13</sup> apologetics is that branch of Christian thought “which focuses on justifying the basic issues of the Christian faith and communicating them effectively to the non-Christian world.”<sup>14</sup> Its goal is “to transform believers into thinkers, and thinkers into believers. It engages our reason, our imagination and our deepest longings. It opens hearts, eyes and minds.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it “glorifies and proclaims the intellectual validity, imaginative richness and spiritual depth of the Gospel in ways that can reach our culture.”<sup>16</sup> According to McGrath, “Apologetics should be seen not as a defensive and hostile reaction against the world, but as a welcomed opportunity to show, praise and present the treasury of the Christian faith. It encourages the faithful to realize their faith, as well as to explain and praise it to people outside the Church. It aims to present the intellectual, moral, imaginative and relational riches of the Christian faith — in part to encourage the faithful and help them develop their faith, but above all to enable those outside the faith community to see the thrilling perspective that occupies the center of the Christian Gospel.”<sup>17</sup>

While defining the modern form of defense of Christianity, McGrath notes that apologetics “is about defending the truth with gentleness and respect. The purpose of apologetics is not to alienate or demean people outside the Church, but to help them open their eyes to the reality, credibility and adequacy of the Christian faith.”<sup>18</sup> McGrath also points to three tasks facing apologists today. These are defense, praise and translation. In the case of defense, apologetics detects obstacles to the faith and provides answers to overcome them. First, however, answers must be found concerning faith for its own sake. “Apologetics is to enter further and deeper into the Christian faith, discovering its riches.”<sup>19</sup> In this task facing apologists, it is important “that Christians show that they understand these concerns, and do not regard them merely as arguments to be easily and simply dismissed.”<sup>20</sup> According to McGrath, personal attitude and character are as important in apologetics as argu-

<sup>13</sup> Alister E. McGrath (b. 1953) — theologian and Christian apologist, professor at Oxford University and King’s College in London, author of numerous works on theology and apologetics, who has been debating with representatives of the new atheism for years, for more information visit <http://alistermcgrath.weebly.com/>.

<sup>14</sup> A. E. McGrath: *Apologetyka po prostu. Jak pomóc poszukującym i sceptykom w odnalezieniu wiary*. Trans. D. KRUPIŃSKA. Poznań 2020, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, pp. 17—18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 18.

ments and analysis. After all, one can “defend the Gospel without taking a defensive stance.”<sup>21</sup>

The second task is to praise. In carrying it out, the audience is to realize “the truthfulness and meaningfulness of the Gospel.”<sup>22</sup> Apologetics should bring out its strongly positive dimension. It involves “presenting the whole attractiveness of Jesus Christ, so that those outside the faith can begin to grasp why He deserves such special attention.”<sup>23</sup>

The third task is translation. It stems from the observation that “many of the core ideas and issues of the Christian faith are probably unknown to a sizable audience.”<sup>24</sup>

According to McGrath, apologetics deals with three important issues. First, it recognizes objections or difficulties regarding the Gospel, responds to them and helps overcome these obstacles to the faith. Second, it communicates and shares the delight of the Christian faith so that others may discover its power to transform people. Thirdly, it translates, that is, interprets and explains, thus performs a hermeneutic of the basic ideas of the Christian faith into the language of modern man.<sup>25</sup> What, then, is the point of apologetics, what is its guiding idea? The Anglican theologian stresses that Christian apologetics is about seriously and continuously dealing with “ultimate questions” posed by a culture, a group of people or an individual in order to show “how the Christian faith can provide meaningful answers to such questions.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, “apologetics clears the ground for evangelization, just as John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>27</sup>

McGrath, emphasizes that in practicing apologetics the following are important: understanding one’s own faith, understanding one’s audience, a clear message, finding points of contact, presenting the whole Gospel, and practice. One’s own understanding of the faith is to have an “apologetic tinge.”<sup>28</sup> Which means that the apologist is to “relate the most important issues of the faith to people”<sup>29</sup> and “incorporate their experiences and ideas.”<sup>30</sup> “This means that we should try to look at the faith from the perspective of an outsider, asking how non-believers might respond to essential aspects of the Gospel, rather than focusing on the discus-

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem.

sion that Christians might have among themselves.”<sup>31</sup> Understanding the audience is the second element of the apologetic strategy. Each person, notes the English theologian, “has his or her own questions, objections and difficulties that need to be addressed, just as they have their own ‘touch points’ and opportunities to communicate the faith.”<sup>32</sup> Another issue is clear communication. It means translating the faith into a language that is clear to the audience, that is, presenting the Gospel in a way that is understandable to the era. Finding points of contact is the fourth point of the apologetic method. It involves finding what is common in contemporary culture and human experience, tangential to the Gospel. “Our task, explains McGrath, is to try to intensify these testimonies (in nature, society or moral code) and use them as a point of contact to proclaim the Christian Gospel.”<sup>33</sup> Presenting the whole Gospel, the fifth element of the strategy, is to take care that the message of the basic content is not impoverished. The apologist should scrupulously distinguish what is the Christian message and what is his or her own views. “If we fail to do this, we will be presenting to our audience not the Christian Gospel, but only those aspects of it that we happen to consider important and interesting.”<sup>34</sup> The last, sixth element, is practice. This is what apologetics is primarily about. Apologetic actions should be taken in everyday life. “Apologetics is both a science and an art. It is not about knowledge, but about wisdom.”<sup>35</sup>

McGrath understands apologetics very broadly. Its role is not only to defend, but also to praise and translate the truths of faith. Therefore, dealing with the methodology of the modern defense of Christianity, he proposes to first deeply understand one’s own faith, in order to then invite others to it and, in the face of misunderstanding and accusations, effectively defend it. Apologetics, according to McGrath, deals with both the defense of Christianity and introduces the depth of faith and justifies it.

Gregory Koukl,<sup>36</sup> on the other hand, proposes an original method for the modern defense of Christianity: “although there is a real battle going on, our skirmishes should resemble diplomatic talks rather than a landing in Normandy. [...] I would like to learn diplomacy and propose a method I would call the ambassador model. This approach is based

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<sup>31</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, pp. 36—37.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> Gregory Koukl (b. 1950) — lecturer in apologetics and philosophy at Biola University. He has been involved in apologetics for many years. Founder and chairman of Stand to Reason (str.org), which aims to educate Christians in Christian apologetics.



more on friendly curiosity — which is a kind of calm diplomacy — than on confrontation.”<sup>37</sup>

What would the method consist of according to this apologist? According to Koukl, it requires three basic skills. First, “Christ’s ambassadors should have the elementary knowledge necessary for this task. They must know the most important content of the Good News about the kingdom of God, and they must also know something about overcoming the obstacles they may encounter in carrying out their diplomatic mission.”<sup>38</sup> Second, information about Christianity alone is not enough. It still takes wisdom to make the message credible. “This requires the tools of a diplomat, not the weapons of a warrior, tactical skills, not brute force.”<sup>39</sup> Third, the character of the apologist-diplomat is also important. “Knowledge and wisdom are attributes of a particular person. If he or she does not temper the attributes of the kingdom he or she serves, this will cast doubt on their words and thwart their efforts.”<sup>40</sup> According to Koukl, in dialogue with non-believers, all three skills — knowledge, wisdom and attitude — play an important role.

Apologetic activities should also pay attention to strategy. Its subject “is the totality of the situation, a large-scale operation, the deployment of forces before the assault.”<sup>41</sup> The Koukl understands strategy as follows: “as followers of Christ, we have a great strategic advantage, for our starting position is based on the very content of what we preach. What we believe will defend itself under the most thorough investigation, especially when alternative views are taken into account.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the strategy contains two distinct areas. The first is offensive apologetics. Its task is to prove the validity of Christianity. In this area, the apologist proves the validity of Christianity, presents an argument for the existence of God and the resurrection of Jesus, and justifies the Christian faith. The second area is defensive apologetics, which focuses on challenges, responses and defenses of Christianity. The themes most often claimed by apologia are the authority and truthfulness of the Bible or the presence of evil in the world.

Thus, strategy indicates the merits of apologetics. Alongside it comes tactics, which play an important role in apologetics efforts. “Although our approach has the character of diplomacy and not of an armed clash,

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<sup>37</sup> G. KOUKL: *Taktyka. Plan gry, czyli jak rozmawiać o wierze chrześcijańskiej*. Trans. M. WÓJCIK. Warszawa 2020, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.



a military comparison may prove helpful in distinguishing strategy from tactics. Tactics, literally ‘the art of action’, focus on a specific, current situation, and is concerned with the practical choreography of individual details. It is not uncommon for a skillful commander to gain an advantage over a better-equipped or numerically stronger opponent through skillful tactical maneuvers.”<sup>43</sup>

Tactics in the apologist’s perspective are the study of “maneuvering techniques in conversations on difficult subjects.”<sup>44</sup> According to Koukl, “it will be helpful in organizing resources in such a way that we can use them skillfully. It will suggest approaches that each of us can put into practice to become more persuasive.”<sup>45</sup> The American apologist stipulates that the tactics are by no means manipulations, tricks or, even less, underhanded ploys. “They are not devious fortes designed to embarrass the other person and force him to concede to you. They are not used to belittle others or humiliate those who have a different opinion than you so that you can win more spiritual trophies.”<sup>46</sup> The tactical approach of Koukl explains as follows: “it requires as much attentive listening as thoughtful responses. You have to strain your attention and be prepared to respond appropriately to new information. This method is more like a one-on-one game of basketball than a game of chess.”<sup>47</sup>

Closing with a reflection on the essence of his own apologetics, Koukl proposes a ten-point credo of the apologist/ambassador.<sup>48</sup> It is to be:

First, ready, that is, open to the possibility of presenting faith in Christ.

Second, patient, that is, first of all, he listens to understand the other side, politely and respectfully talking to anyone who has a different opinion.

Third, reasonable — his convictions are not based on feelings, in conversation he presents rationale, reasons, in discussion he is active, seeking answers.

Fourth, tactically prepared — he recognizes the interlocutor, adapts to him, maneuvers, all in order to challenge his erroneous thinking, and present his own argument in a clear, understandable and convincing way.

Fifth, comprehensible — this means that he cares about the language he uses, not just the rhetoric or jargon itself.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. ibidem, pp. 190—200.

Sixth, fair — he approaches the adversary with respect, listens openly and with understanding.

Seventh, honest — that is, facts count for him, he truthfully presents his own arguments without understating his opponent's voice.

Eighth, humble — he does not overstep his own boundaries, but is aware of the conditionality of the statements he makes.

Ninth, attractive — there is class in his attitude, expressed in courtesy, politeness and manners.

Tenth, dependent — he is aware that he will do nothing good without God.

Koukl sees apologetics as the art of balanced diplomacy, which cannot exist today without appropriate tactics. To this end, he proposes that the apologist becomes an ambassador with the right strategy and adequate tactics. With these, the disputes conducted and the defense of Christianity can be more effective.

Os Guinness<sup>49</sup> wonders what apologetics is for Christians today. According to him, “on the one hand, our era offers the greatest opportunity for Christian witness since the time of Jesus and the apostles.”<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, “we have to deal realistically with the many challenges of the new era of communication, because some of its peculiarities actually hinder communication instead of facilitating it. We also have to deal with the fact that the era of globalization has exposed weaknesses in our current approach to faith sharing, and these need to be rectified — above all, many attempts at Christian apologetics have gotten into the rough waters of the great clash between the philosophies of modernism and postmodernism.”<sup>51</sup> Guinness proposes “to heal a basic and serious deficiency in contemporary Christian communication.”<sup>52</sup> What is it? According to the Anglican apologist, the art of persuasion, which Christians have lost. “The combination of the disengagement from evangelism, the dispersion of evangelism, apologetics and discipleship, and the ignoring of human diversity is a serious problem. This is probably what is behind the fact that many Christians, having grasped the ineffectiveness of contemporary approaches and sensing the unpopularity and unreliability of Christian witness, have simply fallen silent and abandoned evangelism altogether, sometimes relieved

<sup>49</sup> Ian Oswald Guinness (b. 1941) — English writer, social critic and apologist, author or editor of more than thirty books, founder of the Trinity Forum organization, for more information visit <http://www.osguinness.com>.

<sup>50</sup> O. GUINNESS: *Mowa błazna. Odkrywanie sztuki chrześcijańskiej perswazji*. Trans. A. P. WYSZOGRODZKA-GAIK. Warszawa 2020, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem.

to hide their prevarication behind the mask of a newfound passion for social justice, which is allowed to forget the already unpolished style of the Gospel.”<sup>53</sup> According to Guinness, by losing persuasion, Christian communication has lost the core essential to its mission. He explains this phenomenon as follows: “Christian apologia has had many partners in discussion over the centuries — in particular, the great tradition of classical rhetoric initiated by the Greeks and Romans. It has also had numerous opponents and sparring partners — the most recent refreshing call has been the new atheists. All of these challenges have undoubtedly brought benefits, but among their unfortunate side effects is that many apologists have lost touch with evangelism and focused on ‘arguments’ and especially on winning arguments, with not winning the hearts and minds of the people.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, Guinness proposes, “we need to reconnect evangelism with apologetics, and ensure that our best arguments are directed at winning people over, not just winning arguments. At the same time, we should pursue this in a way that agrees with the Gospel itself.”<sup>55</sup>

Restoring persuasion to its place, Guinness is convinced that this is the only way Christians can confront the weaknesses they experience. He states: “almost every one of our testimonies and expressions of communication assumes that people are receptive to our words, or at least interested, even if they don’t feel the need to hear them. Meanwhile, most people are simply not open, or interested, or in need, and in much of the developed modern world there are fewer open-minded people than a generation earlier. In fact, more people are presenting hostile attitudes, and Western Christianity has not faced such hostility in centuries.”<sup>56</sup> Faced with the explosion of pluralism, culture war and increasing secularization, Christians should begin to speak many languages, not just the Christian one. It is necessary “to speak persuasively to the hearts and minds of people who at first often listen to us with prejudice, contempt, impatience and sometimes anger.”<sup>57</sup> This was the attitude of both the Old Testament prophets,<sup>58</sup> and Jesus himself. In his actions “there is a wonderful style of creative persuasion — which could be called prophetic persuasion — and a deep understanding of why such persuasion is needed and how it works.”<sup>59</sup> Reaching out to the Bible, explains the English apologist, in its context, he cannot help but notice the contemporary condition of the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, p. 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. ibidem, pp. 21–24.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, p. 24.

world: “[...] too many people don’t want to believe what we share, or even listen to what we have to say, and our challenge is to help them see it against their will.”<sup>60</sup>

According to Guinness, the art of persuasion stands in opposition to Western methods of communication. These are often one-dimensional, mundane, and overly ineffective. Rebuilding creative persuasion can help Christians in two ways. First, it will help get out of the tragic impasse Christianity has found itself in. Second, the art of persuasion itself will restore Christians’ self-awareness. In addition, the method of persuasion must be related to the cross of Jesus, centered on it, that is, it is to take the form of the cross. It is also to show that “decisions do not belong to us, but to God. For God is his own? chief defender, his own? best apologist, and the one who challenges the world to ‘present his case’. And, as Jesus says, it is his Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who does the crucial part of the work of persuasion and proving.”<sup>61</sup>

At the heart of the lost art of persuasion is Christian apologia, understood as “the art of Christian truth and Christian truths.”<sup>62</sup> Guinness points out that “the first apologists for Christianity from the time of the Roman Empire faced the challenge of presenting a message so new as to be foreign to the first audiences, as well as defining what that message meant in the classical era and its sophisticated and established ways of thinking. In the case of the modern world, the challenge is to present something so familiar to the point of being unfamiliar in general, while at the same time giving rise to the belief that people are tired of it.”<sup>63</sup> Guinness situates the Christian art of persuasion within apologetics and states that it is an important part of it. Its task is to convince people of the Christian faith. However, “there is no macro-theory in the case of persuasion.”<sup>64</sup> Moreover, “reclaiming the art of persuasion will not be easy because of the confusion and controversy that contemporary Christian apologia is stirring up.”<sup>65</sup>

Three issues, according to Guinness, have special significance. The first remark is related to negation. There is no single way to practice persuasion. Since “Jesus never addressed two different people in the same way, so neither should we. Every person is unique and special and deserves an approach that respects that uniqueness.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p. 31.

The second remark concerns the definition of persuasion. It is an art, not a science. “It has more in common with theology than with technology.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in creative persuasion, faithfulness to the Bible is important. It is supposed to characterize the apologist. Moreover, it is related to truth. “Creative persuasion is the art of truth, the art inspired by truth.”<sup>68</sup> In the case of creative persuasion, we are dealing with verbal fencing, not smart talk. “Yes, one should be aware of the huge debt that apologetics has incurred in classical rhetoric.”<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, “Christians must never leave persuasion at the level of technique; Christian apologia must be full of faith.”<sup>70</sup> Guinness notes, “to see in apologetics only technique is an insult to the Gospel and the immense importance of what God says and does through Jesus. From the simplest joke to the greatest paradox of all time — the incarnation — the Bible is full of stories, parables, dramas, fortes and jokes that serve the highest purpose — the proclamation of the Gospel — and are shaped by the truth and logic of the message of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apologetics must always know the best and worst thoughts of the world, but at the same time must always remain faithful to the One we know and want to present to others.”<sup>71</sup>

The third issue is related to the object of Christian persuasion. It is for those “who love God and who want to defend what they know and love, who appreciate that love is a fundamental part of the knowledge derived from the truth sought and found. Persuasion is for followers of Jesus who love Him because they know Him, and therefore do not need to be persuaded as to the unspeakable privilege of knowing Him and making Him known.”<sup>72</sup> Christian persuasion, Guinness stresses, “is not for salesmen, propagandists, practitioners of proselytism, PR consultants, lobbyists, press officers, propaganda specialists, loss mitigation experts and the like.”<sup>73</sup> Who, then, is its target audience? “It is for those who wish to share the way of Jesus because of their love for Him, and who know that love plays a key role in the human search for knowledge and truth. It is for those whose hearts respond to the words of the prophet Isaiah about the beauty of the herald running through the mountains to proclaim the good news, and those who know something of what the great French apologist Blaise Pascal experienced during

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<sup>67</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 32.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, p. 39.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem, p. 40.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, pp. 42—43.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, p. 43.

his mystical 'night of fire' when he experienced the presence of God directly."<sup>74</sup>

Guinness, advocating the practice of apologetics, suggests that it return to the forgotten art of Christian persuasion. Therein lies the strength of the modern defense of Christianity. Apologetics, to be effective, should regain its lost creative persuasion. Thanks to it, it is possible to gain for the Christian faith people who, for various reasons, are indifferent or even resistant to the words of the Gospel.

## Features of apologia

In answering the second key question, I will point out the most essential features of a contemporary defense of Christianity that remain essential in the modern European context. These are contextuality, trans-confessionalism, dialogicality, rationality, and cultural orientation.<sup>75</sup>

The new apologia is carried out in the current time and space, so recognizing the context of Christianity proves to be a necessary condition for its effective operation. Modern apologists accurately diagnose the spirit of the current times, reading the leading ideas and intellectual currents. They pay special attention to all activities that overtly or covertly take an anti-Christian form. So, they stand in opposition to the dictate of political correctness, which often reveals itself in the actions of institutions that impose the will of a secular minority. While disagreeing with the deconstruction of basic Christian concepts and values, they come to their defense, justifying the superiority of Christianity over postmodern philosophy. Apologists also point to the permanence and immutability of Christ's religion, against which attempts are made to dilute or discredit it. The creators of the new apologia, recognizing the expansiveness of secularization, which is revealed in attempts to build societies without God, states that are completely secularized and devoid of any reference to Christianity, see in a living community of faith a rescue for a world that rejects the sacrum. Supra-confessionalism or nondenominationalism means the presence of a new apologia in a completely secular space. Apologists, practicing the defense of fundamental matters, take the side of common sense, truth, honesty or justice. In doing so, they treat Christianity as their natural ground, the foundation on which all civilization

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<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> For more on this topic, see P. ARTEMIUK: *Renesans apologii*. Płock 2016.

is built. Therefore, they appeal to it. Christian values always appear in the horizon of justification.

Although one of the reasons for the return of apologia was the fatigue of dialogicality, this does not mean that its creators completely excluded this kind of attitude. On the contrary, dialogicality is present in many dimensions of modern apologia. First, it appears in the apologetic method itself. It signifies curiosity, desire to know, openness, interest in the world. The new apologists appear as artists who are well versed in modernity. They move freely in diverse areas of culture. Their conservatism has nothing to do with closing themselves off, retreating into the “silence of the cloister,” but is a voice of defense resounding through the noise of this world. Reality does not frighten them, nor is it just a place for the forces of evil to operate, so they do not build walls to keep them pristine. They look for traces of God in the world and point to the existence of an inner logos, with the help of which man can order created reality. They avoid the alternative: either dialogue or apologia. They do not want to just defend or just dialogue. For them, the new apologia is “apologia in dialogue.” And only in this way, according to them, can it be practiced today. Such an attitude allows them to “avoid associating the apologist with a certain form of obstinacy, fundamentalism; what Fr. Janusz Pasierb called ‘a face bracing and fierce’. In any case, the great apologists of modern times: Chesterton, Frossard, Żychiewicz, Messori, Weigel are famous for: their intellectual astuteness, and at the same time their sense of humor, intelligent irony and distance to themselves, their joy of life and openness. One feels that they love this world, are knowledgeable about it and its changes, understand it, know how to enter into dialogue with contemporary culture, do not condemn, remember that the world — even a world like ours — remains not in the hold of Satan, but in the embrace of God’s providence and mercy. All this was expressed in them in: a cheerful faith, an understanding of modern culture and the ability to dialogue with it, solid argumentation, a certain Anglo-Saxon joviality and a ‘French’ wit, glamourising their world.”<sup>76</sup>

The defense of reason finds a special place in the new apologia. Standing up for rationality, apologists first see it as a constitutive element of human identity, which fundamentally shapes man. In defending reason, they not only speak out against irrationalism or fideism, but by emphasizing rationality, they show that man is able to discover the phenomenon of his existence, its depth and finitude. Through reason, as Blaise Pascal suggested, one can see both one’s own greatness and misery. It is the rationality of existence that prompts apologists to defend the gift of life, from

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<sup>76</sup> H. SEWERYNIAK, P. ARTEMIUK: “Apologia w dialogu. Wstęp.” In: *Bronić czy dialogować?...*, p. 8.



the moment of conception to natural death. Ultimately, reason prompts fundamental questions and the search for depth, which is God. In defending rationality, the creators of the new apologia recognize its constant presence within Christianity. Even in the early days of the Church, the interrelation of *fides et ratio* was discussed. Reaching back to these early Christian disputes, as well as to ancient Greek studies, modern apologists point to the rationality of faith itself. Contemplation of God does not come at the expense of reason, but *fides and ratio* complementarily elevate man to discover God's truth.

Modern apologists, when they take it upon themselves to analyze any work, do not only evaluate its objective value, merit, artistic craftsmanship or novelty of form, but first and foremost look for depth in it that will direct and point to another space of human existence. Reflection on culture thus becomes a path to cognition, an expedition upstream to the very source. Apologia, carried out in this space, guards the traditions of the old masters, exposes the shallowness of the fake role models, public intellectuals cherished by the modern-day salon and the spiritual emptiness of their artistic forms. Defending culture from ideological entanglement, it sets its task, which can be defined as showing the other space. Apologists, looking at artists, first of all, are perfectly familiar with the contemporary currents of culture and art, accepting them and feeling very comfortable in them, able to ask pertinent questions about the source of their inspiration and the purposefulness of the resulting works. They do not measure the greatness of artistic achievements by the shock of the audience or the scandal of the premiere performance. The discovery of the spiritual dimension of a work, the inspiration that provokes metaphysical questions or the search for the inner Logos that is born under the influence of art, these are, according to the apologists, the real consequences caused by contact with the work. The apologia of culture, therefore, is the consistent unveiling of the other space, showing Beauty dwelling in the cathedral, making a pilgrimage to the source.

## Conclusions

1. Methodology of apologia/apologetics. In their works, contemporary apologists show the topicality of apologetics. Their analyses are primarily concerned with methodological issues. They pay attention not so much to the content that ought to substantiate an apologia, but are concerned with the form that modern apologetics should take.

According to A. E. McGrath, apologetics today has three tasks to fulfill. They are defense, praise, and translation. In the case of defense, apologetics detects obstacles to faith and provides answers to overcome them. Praise concerns the truthfulness and meaningfulness of the Gospel. Apologetics should bring out its strongly positive dimension and make a presentation of the entire attractiveness of the message of Jesus Christ. The task of elucidation, in turn, involves explaining the essential ideas and issues of the Christian faith to audiences to whom Christianity is almost unknown.

Koukl, while undertaking a reflection on apologetics, seeks first of all its adequate form. He sees an effective defense as the art of balanced diplomacy rather than the art of warfare. Without adequate tactics, apologetics cannot exist today. Koukl believes that an apologist should become an ambassador with the right strategy and the right tactics. He proposes several of them, giving each of them original terms. With the right tactics, the defense of Christianity can be more effective.

Guinness, dealing with apologetics, postulates that it should return to the art of Christian persuasion. According to him, for the defense of Christianity to be effective, it should regain its lost strength. Through the art of persuasion it is possible to win for the Christian faith people who, for various reasons, are indifferent or even resistant to the words of the Gospel.

2. Apologetics and evangelization. The analyzed apologists evidently link the issue of defending Christianity with evangelization. This is because they believe that apologetics plays an essential role during the preaching of the kerygma. The proclamation of the Gospel, its presentation, to be effective, must be combined with apologetics. The strength of the argument, the rationale for the credibility of Christianity is essential in the evangelization process. Each of the presented apologists draws attention to the close relationship between evangelization and apologetics. Important issues concerning the Christian faith already at the stage of preaching call for apologia. Therefore, in one voice, the apologists combine defense with presentation and translation. The art of Christian persuasion or apologetic tactics also serve this purpose. Each of the proposed apologetic methods is ultimately intended to turn an opponent into a friend, an indifferent man into an ardent follower, and a faithful thinker, and vice versa.

3. Features of the new apologia. The most essential features of modern apologetics, which remain essential in the contemporary European context, are contextuality, trans-confessionalism, dialogicality, rationality and cultural orientation. Recognizing the context of Christianity proves to be a necessary condition for its effective operation. Supra-confessionalism or

nondenominationalism is apologia's entry into a completely secular space. The new apologia is characterized by openness and a desire to understand the addressee. Apologists stress the importance of listening to the voice of all those situated outside of Christianity. Standing up for rationality, they see it as a constitutive element of human identity that shapes man. By defending reason, they not only speak out against irrationalism or fideism, but by emphasizing rationality, they show that man is able to discover the phenomenon of his existence, its depth and finitude. Reflection on culture in modern apologia becomes a path to cognition, an expedition upstream to the very source. The defense, carried out in this space, guards the traditions of the masters, exposes the shallowness of popular public intellectuals and artists and the spiritual emptiness of their forms of expression.

Modern Europe needs a rational and profound apologia that understands the modern world and enters into dialogue with it, without forgetting the Christian roots of Western civilization.

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PRZEMYSŁAW ARTEMIUK

## De quelle apologie du christianisme l'Europe contemporaine a-t-elle besoin ?

### Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de répondre à la question : quel type d'apologie du christianisme l'Europe moderne a-t-elle besoin ? Dans la première partie, l'auteur, en utilisant la méthode analytique, se réfère aux travaux de trois apologistes (A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinness) et montre, à travers leurs exemples, comment pratiquer l'apologie dans le contexte européen moderne. La seconde partie, de nature synthétique, présente les caractéristiques clés de l'apologie qui devraient caractériser la défense actuelle du christianisme. Les analyses menées permettent de tirer les conclusions suivantes : premièrement, les apologistes modernes dans leurs travaux montrent l'actualité de l'apologétique, leurs analyses concernent principalement les questions méthodologiques. Ils ne se préoccupent pas tant du contenu que l'apologie devrait contenir, mais de la forme que l'apologétique moderne devrait prendre ; deuxièmement, les apologistes analysés associent manifestement la question de la défense du christianisme à l'évangélisation. Cela est dû au fait qu'ils considèrent que l'apologétique joue un rôle essentiel pendant la prédication du kérygme. L'annonce de l'Évangile, sa présentation, pour être efficace, doit être combinée avec l'apologétique ; troisièmement, les caractéristiques les plus essentielles de la défense moderne, qui restent nécessaires dans le contexte européen contemporain, sont la contextualité, la supra-confessionnalité, la dialogicalité, la rationalité et l'orientation culturelle.

**Mots-clés :** apologie, apologétique, christianisme, Europe, contexte, rationalité, culture, trans-confessionnalisme, dialogicalité, A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinness, T. Halik, Ch. Delsol, T.P. Terlikowski, Pape François

PRZEMYSŁAW ARTEMIUK

## Di quale apologia del cristianesimo ha bisogno l'Europa contemporanea?

### Riassunto

Lo scopo di questo articolo è rispondere alla domanda: di quale tipo di apologia del cristianesimo ha bisogno l'Europa moderna? Nella prima parte, l'autore, utilizzando il metodo analitico, si riferisce alle opere di tre apologeti (A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinness) e mostra, attraverso i loro esempi, come praticare l'apologia nel contesto europeo moderno. La seconda parte, di natura sintetica, è una presentazione delle caratteristiche principali dell'apologia che dovrebbe caratterizzare la difesa attuale del cristianesimo. Le analisi effettuate permettono di trarre le seguenti conclusioni: in primo luogo, gli apologeti moderni, nelle loro opere, mostrano l'attualità dell'apologetica; le loro analisi riguardano principalmente le questioni metodologiche. Non prestano tanta attenzione al contenuto che la giustificazione apologetica dovrebbe contenere, ma alla forma che l'apologetica moderna dovrebbe assumere; in secondo luogo, gli apologeti analizzati collegano evidentemente la questione della difesa del cristianesimo all'evangelizzazione. Questo perché ritengono che l'apologetica svolga un ruolo essenziale durante la predicazione del kerigma. La proclamazione del Vangelo, la sua presentazione, per essere efficace, deve essere combinata con l'apologetica; in terzo luogo, le caratteristiche più essenziali della difesa moderna, che rimangono necessarie nel contesto europeo contemporaneo, sono la contestualità, la sopra-confessionale, la dialogicità, la razionalità e l'orientamento culturale.

**Parole chiave:** apologia, apologetica, cristianesimo, Europa, contesto, razionalità, cultura, trans-confessionalismo, dialogicità, A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinness, T. Halik, Ch. Delsol, T.P. Terlikowski, Papa Francesco