

# AN APOLOGETICS OF HOPE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: REREADING 1 PETER 3:15 IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

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## *Abstract*

This contribution explores the evolving role of Christian apologetics in the post-modern era, focusing on the interplay between apologetics, hope, and the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:15. It addresses the disassociation of modern apologetics from hope, which has led to a crisis of both concepts. Through historical and theological analysis, the chapter examines the development of apologetics from early Christianity to modern times, highlighting the need to integrate hope into apologetic discourse. Drawing on the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and other theological sources, it proposes a renewed apologetics that includes compelling narratives and a systematic theology of hope. This approach aligns with Pope Francis's call for a creative apologetics that engages with contemporary challenges. The research suggests that a new apologetics of hope can effectively respond to postmodern skepticism, fostering deeper engagement with faith and addressing the spiritual and existential concerns of the 21st century.

*Keywords:* apologetics; hope; postmodernity; 1 Peter 3:15; new evangelization.

My topic, *An apologetics of hope in the 21st century: rereading 1 Peter 3:15 in a postmodern world*, deals with four interlocking concerns and their mutual interactions. The four concerns, simply put, are (1) the science of apologetics, (2) the concept of hope, (3) the context of postmodernity, and (4) the message of 1 Peter 3:15. Each of these concerns on its own requires explanation; when they interact, however, they modify each other mutually, and therefore, my exposition of these interconnected ideas cannot simply be linear. I will take as my starting and end point the message of 1 Peter 3:15, cycling my way through the other three concerns to come back to

a contemporary rereading and reapplication of 1 Peter 3:15 in which the meanings of apologetics, hope, and postmodernity are mutually attuned.

### 1. *1 Peter 3:15 as the Scriptural basis for apologetics.*

From the earliest centuries of Christianity, 1 Peter 3:15 has provided a stimulus for Christian interaction with the wider culture. The apostle's letter provides a clear call to action: "Always be ready to give an explanation (ἀπολογία, *apologian*) to anyone who asks you for a reason (λόγον, *logon*) for your hope (ἐλπίδος, *elpidos*)"<sup>1</sup>. The Greek word ἀπολογία (*apologia*) in both profane and Biblical usage often refers to a formal defense in a court of law<sup>2</sup>. The context of 1 Peter 3:15, however, does not suggest the Christians to whom the apostle was writing were undergoing a legal persecution. Rather, the inspired author takes up anew the rich biblical theme of the suffering of the righteous, in the light of the crucified and risen Jesus<sup>3</sup>. The Christians the author addresses were to follow in the footsteps of Christ (3:18). When facing insults, they were to return a blessing (3:9); they were "suffering because of righteousness" yet should not be afraid or terrified (3:14). The suffering to which the apostle refers seems to be primarily the moral anguish of people who were maligned or defamed (3:16). Nothing in this context, however, suggests formal legal persecution. Therefore, the apostle's encouragement to give an *apologia* to anyone who asks a reason for Christian hope should be read taking into account a wider range of meanings of *apologia* than merely its technical sense as a legal defense. Thus, translations that favor words such as "explanation" or "account" probably offer the most apt rendering of the concept.

Whatever the apostle's intended meaning of this technical legal term in non-technical context, the text of 1 Peter 3:15 has provided historical impetus to at least four different Christian responses. The first three may

<sup>1</sup> *New American Bible*, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC 2011 Revised Edition, 1 Pe 3:15.

<sup>2</sup> For biblical examples, see especially Acts 22:1 and Acts 25:16. Two passages from Philippians, 1:7 and 1:16, may also be included in this context, though the use of ἀπολογία in that context may suggest a wider meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J.B. GREEN, *1 Peter*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary, William B Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2007, pp. 110-118. It is noteworthy that Joel B. Green's commentary on the pericope of 1 Peter 3:13-17 is focused so exclusively on the theme of suffering that he omits any detailed exegesis of verse 15.

be identified by a terminological distinction that is useful but rarely observed<sup>4</sup>. In the first place, we may speak of *apology* as a basic attitude or readiness that all Christians should have, to give an account of Christian hope in both formal and informal contexts, whether in academic debates or with friends enjoying a mug of beer<sup>5</sup>. The second response can be identified with term *apologies*, referring to a specific literary genre in which the account of Christian hope moves from the sphere of daily life to the written page. The production of apologetic literature within Christian circles first occurred very early on in the history of Christianity. The first complete examples of apologetic literature date from the second century A.D. Broadly speaking, apologetic literature includes two types of works. Some were written in the form of dialogues, as a Christian variation of the philosophical and rhetorical literary traditions of late antiquity. Others were specifically titled as apologies, directed to important individuals (usually civil authorities) as a written response to specific attacks against Christianity in particular contexts<sup>6</sup>. The third response is that of Christian *apologetics*, by which I refer to a scientific and systematic defense of Christian faith. Although this third approach produced its own literature, its scope was not literary or rhetorical, but scientific, and its arguments were intended to have universal validity. Herein lies the distinction between literary apologies and scientific apologetics: apologies responded to particular occasions whereas apologetics aimed to provide a universal system of argumentation. The emergence of scientific apologetics, however, did not take place in a historical vacuum. The fourth and final response is that of theology itself which, independently of any adversary, seeks to understand the reasons for Christian hope.

My focus, however, is on the third response, Christian apologetics. During the early modern period, we find a transition from literary apologies to full-fledged attempts at scientific apologetics<sup>7</sup>. This new science sought

<sup>4</sup> For the three-fold classification of apologetics as attitude or behavior, as a literary genre, and as a scientific discipline, see: G. LORIZIO, *Teologia fondamentale in La teologia del XX secolo: Un bilancio*, edited by G. Canobbio-P. Coda, Città nuova, Roma, 2003, p. 391.

<sup>5</sup> E. BOSETTI, *Apologia*, in *Dictionary of fundamental theology*, edited by R. Latourelle-R. Fisichella, Crossroad, New York 1994, p. 40b.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. GEERLINGS, *Apologetica e teologia fondamentale nella patristica*, in, *Corso di teologia fondamentale. IV. Trattato di gnoseologia teologica*, edited by W. Kern- H. J. Pottmeyer-M. Seckler, Queriniana, Brescia 1990, pp. 381-383.

<sup>7</sup> Certain Medieval works, such as Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles* contributed valuable material for later apologetics. Nonetheless, in the Medieval period, apologetics

to provide universally valid reasons to three interlocking questions: why should I be a Catholic? Why should I be a Christian? Why should I believe in any religion whatsoever? The science of apologetics sought to build an argument for Christian faith from the ground up. Against atheism, apologetics offered a demonstration of the reasonableness of religion; against Deism, apologetics demonstrated the reasonableness of Christianity; lastly, in its Catholic version, argued against Protestantism for the reasonableness of holding to the Catholic faith within the Catholic church. Apologetics, in its structure, themes, and its rational approach to defending and proposing the Catholic faith, was a thoroughly modern response to typically modern concerns<sup>8</sup>. Along the way, the entire endeavor of apologetics became much more focused on reasons for *belief*, and more specifically, with belief in this or that doctrine, with a correlative disassociation from Christian *hope*, as originally proposed in 1 Peter 3:15. If apologetics, then, is no longer about hope, then where does hope fit into the Christian vision?

## 2. *The Theology of Hope: two ways of considering hope according to the example of St. Thomas Aquinas*

The historical development of the science of apologetics in the modern period led to a progressive disassociation from hope and correlative fixation on faith as the object and goal of apologetics. Hope was not lost, however; it was simply reassigned to the realm of theology, where, following the example of St. Thomas Aquinas, it was often considered under one of two headings. First, hope could be analyzed as a human passion, namely, something that happens in us as a response to a possible good that we perceive but do not yet possess<sup>9</sup>. Second, hope could be considered as

was not yet conceived as a fully distinct branch of theology. Furthermore, the socio-cultural conditions in Christian Europe provided few occasions for the kind of apologetic literature prevalent in the patristic period. See A. DULLES, *A history of apologetics*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco (Calif.) 2005, 91-144; G. LARCHER, *Modelli di problematica teologico-fondamentale nel medioevo*, in *Corso di teologia fondamentale*, cit. IV, pp. 396-412; A. SABETTA, *Un'idea di teologia fondamentale tra storia e modelli*, Studium Edizioni, Roma 2017, pp. 104-156.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. REIKERSTORFER, *Modelli teologico-fondamentali nell'era moderna*, in *Corso di teologia fondamentale*, cit., IV, pp. 413-419; A. SABETTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-176; A. DULLES, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-208; R. LATOURELLE, *Fundamental theology: I. History and specific character*, in *Dictionary of fundamental theology*, cit., p. 324b

<sup>9</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.22, a.1, c.; q.40, a.1, c.

a theological virtue<sup>10</sup>. As a virtue, hope is seen as a good operative habit; in other words, it is something that we actively do both consciously and habitually<sup>11</sup>. Insofar as it is a theological virtue, hope is virtue that comes from God and is oriented back to God<sup>12</sup>. These two distinct ways of considering hope, as both a human passion and a theological virtue, illustrate the Catholic doctrine of elevating grace, whereby grace does not take away nature but perfects it (*gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*)<sup>13</sup>. Like simple human hope, theological hope has as its object a good which is perceived but not present. It differs from simple human hope, insofar as the good of theological hope is unseen (cf. Heb 11:1) and is apprehended only by faith.

### 3. *The project of modernity and the advent of secular hope*

After having examined briefly the concepts of apologetics and hope, I now turn my attention to modernity, as the precursor and ground for understanding our postmodern context. In this section, I intend to illustrate the ways in which modernity shaped the apologetic endeavor and reshaped the concept of hope. On this basis, it will be clearer that the collapse of modernity and the shift into postmodernity brings with it new understandings of both apologetics and the role of Christian hope.

The broad tradition of Catholic theology, as represented by Thomas Aquinas, saw in hope both a passion embedded in human nature tending to the goods proportioned to that nature, and a theological virtue, whereby that same human nature was elevated by grace to tend towards a good beyond the wildest dreams of human nature. The dawn of modernity, however, brought with it the advent of a purely secular hope – to paraphrase Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) hope within the bounds of bare reason<sup>14</sup>. At first sight, this may seem like a restriction of hope to the merely terrestrial plane, eliminating any reference to a transcendent, supernatural goal of

<sup>10</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.17, a.1, c.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.55.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.62, a.1, c.

<sup>13</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, lib.2, d.9, q.1, a.8, arg.3. See also THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.17, a.1, c.

<sup>14</sup> The allusion, of course is to Kant's 1793 work *Religion with the Bounds of Bare Reason* (German original: *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, Nicolovius, 1793).

human life. The initial effect of secular reason on hope, on the contrary, produced a surprising and paradoxical result. Some of the more enthusiastic partisans of the Enlightenment project went to the extreme of portraying reason as a goddess<sup>15</sup>. Since divinized Reason knows no bound, unbounded reason could scarcely bind hope within its own non-existent boundaries. Secular hope, within its own sphere, seemed limitless.

Secular hope was not only allied with secular reason but also with the secular imagination. Modernity, enamored of its impressive achievements in both the physical sciences and in technological advancements, was convinced that it held the key for unending human improvement. Who needs heaven, when science can promise to create heaven on earth? The undeniable progress of modern times unfortunately spawned an insidious offspring, namely, the myth of progress, whose mantra was best expressed by the French psychologist Émile Coué de la Châtaigneraie (1857-1926): «Every day in every way, its getting better and better»<sup>16</sup>. The myth of progress penetrated and inspired the later developments of Modern thought. Hegel saw progress as the necessary unfolding of the Absolute Spirit, while Karl Marx thought he could trace the laws of human progress in materialist framework. Both thinkers, in distinct ways, represent the *Zeitgeist* of Modernity's secular hope.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the promise of secular hope came crashing down, producing a three-fold crisis affecting modernity, hope, and apologetics.

#### 4. *Postmodernity and the threefold crisis of modernity, apologetics, and hope.*

I now turn my attention to postmodernity, which I interpret as a reaction to a threefold crisis affecting modernity itself, apologetics, and hope.

While it is not easy to trace the birth of the postmodern mindset in the Western World, I would like to mention three major world events that

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. LAWLOR, *Reason, Cult of Goddess of* in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1967, XII, p. 118b.

<sup>16</sup> This formulation is the singer and songwriter John Lennon's paraphrase of Coué in the song *Beautiful Boy*. Coué's original expression was «Tous les jours à tous points de vue je vais de mieux en mieux» (Every day, in every respect, I am getting better and better). For the English translation of Coué's seminal work, see E. COUÉ, *Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion*, American Library Service, New York, 1922, p. 23

illustrate the collapse of Modernity and its secular hopes<sup>17</sup>. Whether these events caused the collapse, or were symptoms of the existing crisis, I am unable to say. What seems clear, however, is that the first major crisis of the idea of Modernity can be pinpointed to 1914 and the outbreak of what we now call World War I. At the time, however, it was hailed as “The Great War” or “The War to End all Wars”<sup>18</sup>. The ideology of Modernity naively believed that the War was necessary to usher in a new age of peace, prosperity and progress<sup>19</sup>. This naiveté is marvelously portrayed in the biographical film *Tolkien* (2019); in a poignant scene in the middle of the movie Tolkien’s friends and classmates at Oxford break out into jubilation when Great Britain’s entry into the War is announced. They celebrated like merry fools on the lawns of Oxford. The viewer, however, cannot help but be appalled, since from start to finish the film is haunted by the horrors of the battlefield.

Europe would quickly discover that there was nothing “great” about war, and the sequel would show that the conflict did anything but put an end to all wars. If World War I shook the foundation of Modernity’s optimism to its roots, World War II should have delivered the definitive deathblow to Modernity. From mass extermination camps to the systematic bombing of civilian populations, ending with the twin tragedies of Hiroshima and

<sup>17</sup> The transferal of the word “postmodern” from art criticism to philosophy and sociology is generally attributed to the influential book of JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, Minuit, Paris, 1979 (English translation *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translation from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1984). Lyotard, however, is merely identifying a tendency already present in society. For a discussion of various proposed readings of the end of modernism and the birth of postmodernism, see G.E. VEITH, JR., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Crossway Books, Wheaton 1994, pp. 38-46.

<sup>18</sup> The expression “The war to end all wars” is a popular variant of phrase derived from H.G. WELLS, *The War That Will End War*, Frank and Cecil Palmer, London 1814. Wells, however, had no Romantic illusions about the war. He writes: «For this is now a war for peace...It aims at a settlement that shall stop this sort of thing for ever...This, the greatest of all wars, is not just another war – it is the last war!...we face these horrors to make an end of them», *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> The chief spokesperson for this view was the German general and military strategist Friedrich von Bernhardi, who argued in 1912 that «War is a biological necessity of the first importance, a regulative element in the life of mankind which cannot be dispensed with, since without it an unhealthy development will follow, which excludes every advancement of the race, and therefore all real civilization». F. VON BERNHARDI, *Germany and the Next War*, translated by Allen H. Powles, Longmans, Green, and Co., New York 1914.p. 18.



Nagasaki giving birth to the atomic age, the Second World War illustrated that humanity's scientific prowess and technological progress did not always tend to what is better for humanity. The myth of progress should have died altogether under the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki<sup>20</sup>.

Yet, one of World War II's victors seemed to carry the hopes of Modernity itself. The Soviet Union claimed the mantle of Marxism, and with it, the very project of creating a rationally constructed utopia<sup>21</sup>. Although the Soviet dream was a nightmare for many who lived inside it, it nevertheless captured the thoroughly Modern imagination of many among Western intelligentsia<sup>22</sup>. The illusion that state-run Marxism could save Modern rationality came crashing down with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself in 1991, effectively ending the Cold War that had dominated geopolitics since the 1950's.

The three major events just mentioned – World War I, World War II, and the collapse of the Soviet bloc – symbolized and revealed the underlying failures of the Modern enterprise. Each of the three crises exposed the fatal flaw in Modernity's blind faith in the myth of progress under the direction of deified universal reason. The Twentieth Century showed the world the dark side of Modernity, in which the myth of progress was used to justify war, genocide, and the systematic oppression of nations and peo-

<sup>20</sup> «What is beyond dispute is that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki opened a new era in the history of humanity. In the twisted path of modernity, the bitter irony of the second half of the twentieth century was that it was a triumph of "theoretical reason" in scientific technological discoveries, including that of atomic energy, but a defeat of "practical reason". Neither the voice of moral conscience nor existing democratic institutions proved strong enough to prevent the use of this most powerful means for an inhumane end. In the Promethean-like challenge of God, Man went too far and lost his immortality». E. DEMENCHONOK, *Introduction: Philosophy after Hiroshima: From Power Politics to the Ethics of Nonviolence and Co-Responsibility* in «The American Journal of Economics and Sociology» LXVIII/1, 2009, pp. 22.

<sup>21</sup> "The trust in human reason and the rejection of the supernatural took many forms, but nowhere did the modernistic impulse reach further or more ambitiously than in the invention of the Marxist state." G.E. VEITH, JR., *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Johnson, in his monumental history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *Modern Times: A History of the World from the 1920's to the Year 2000*, Phoenix Giant, Guernsey, 1999, chronicles various instances of the Western intelligentsia's blind and naïve appraisal of the Soviet Union. See pages 88 and 275-277. See also: R. ARON, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Routledge, London 2001 (translation of R. ARON, *L'opium des intellectuels*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris 1955); P. HOLLANDER, *Marxism and western intellectuals in the post-communist era* in «Society» 37 (2000) 2, pp. 22-28.



ples<sup>23</sup>. Does this mean that Modernity itself is dead, definitively replaced by Postmodernity? Not entirely, for a portion of Modernity's spirit lives on, not unlike Tolkien's villain, Sauron<sup>24</sup>. The collapse of Modernity, however, brought with it deep distrust of Modernity's version of hope and chronic crisis in Christian apologetics.

The crisis of hope is self-evident. The collapse of Modernity showed the emptiness of its secular promises and the vanity of secular hopes. The dream of universal human fraternity cannot be realized without the gift of divine charity. Postmodernism rejects the modern myth of progress and replaces it with one of two alternatives. Either progress is illusory and human beings, both individually and collectively, are just marching in place, or things are actually going from bad to worse, whether socially, economically, morally, environmentally, or all of the above. Faced with these alternatives, the postmodern instinct is not so much to return to a theologically grounded Christian hope, but to abandon hope altogether and cave in to anxiety and despair<sup>25</sup>.

The crisis of apologetics is not as self-evident, but neither is it surprising. The science of apologetics was born in the Modern era, it was shaped by Modern concerns, and it responded to Modern questions. Most of all, it shared Modernity's view of science as an appeal to universal reason. The collapse of Modernity called into question the very foundations on which the science of apologetics was built<sup>26</sup>. Postmodernity rejects the ideal of universal truths. At most, it can accept particular truth-claims, as long as they are empirically verifiable within particular circumstances. In a postmodern world, the prospects for a universal argument for religious, Christian, and Catholic belief is simply perceived as untenable.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. L. HINTON - K. ROTH, *The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide*, in *Annihilating Difference, The Anthropology of Genocide*, edited by A. L. Hinton, University of California Press, Berkeley 2002, pp. 1-40.

<sup>24</sup> Although this metaphor captures the spirit of the Postmodern rejection of Modernity, it makes far too harsh a judgement on Modernity as a whole, which, despite its failures, also saw many significant advances in authentic human development.

<sup>25</sup> *Kant and the Possibility of Progress, From Modern Hopes to Postmodern Anxieties*, edited by S.A. Stoner-P.T. Wilford, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2021, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> R. LATOURELLE, *Fundamental theology. I. History and Specific Character* in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, cit., pp. 324b-326a.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. P. HEJZLAR, *Christian truth-claims in contemporary epistemological setting*, in «Communio viatorum» LIII/1, 2011, pp. 47-48.

### 5. *Hope for apologetics through an apologetics of hope*

Is there any hope for a renewed apologetic science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Despite calls for a “new apologetics” since the late 1990’s, few Christian thinkers have undertaken the task of renewing apologetics from the ground up to face the challenges of a presenting reasons for belief in a postmodern world<sup>28</sup>. The most common tendencies are either to accept the inadequacies of apologetics in a postmodern context, or to declare postmodernity itself as the enemy. This is the position of H. Wayne House and Dennis W. Jowers in their appropriately titled book *Reasons for Our Hope* (B&H Academic, Nashville, TN, 2011). In this introduction to Christian Apologetics, the authors, both Evangelical Christians, hold that Christians should definitively reject postmodernism, which they identify with incredulity to toward metanarratives, the dissolution of the subject, and the impossibility of representing external reality. For House and Jowers, «both postmodernism and modernism, therefore, are anathema from the perspective of orthodox Christianity»<sup>29</sup>. Consequently, they dedicate an entire chapter to explain how a Christian apologist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century might «reason with a postmodernist and attempt, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to persuade him to abandon postmodernism and to embrace Christianity»<sup>30</sup>.

While House and Jowers have produced a thoughtful and well-argued book, their arguments seem to lack self-awareness of both the influence of Modernity on the science of apologetics and the influence of postmodernity on their own approach. The authors, for instance, embrace an apologetic approach that makes use of the quite postmodern technique of worldview analysis<sup>31</sup>. Furthermore, the authors abandon the Modern assumption of

<sup>28</sup> The calls for apologetics to address the new situation of postmodernity are not new. See: L.L. SNYDER, *Apologetics Before and After Postmodernism* in «Journal of Communication and Religion» XXII/2, 1999, pp. 237-271; T. GUARINO, *Postmodernity and five fundamental theological issues*, in «Theological Studies» LVII/4, 1996, pp. 654-689; G.B. SINISCALCHI, *Postmodernism and the need for rational apologetics in a post-conciliar Church*, in «The Heythrop Journal», LII, 2011, pp. 751-771.

<sup>29</sup> H. W. HOUSE - D.W. JOWERS, *Reasons for our hope*, B&H Academic, Nashville, TN 2011, 249.

<sup>30</sup> H. W. HOUSE - D.W. JOWERS, *op. cit.*, p. 394. House and Jowers identify three kinds of postmodernists: academic postmodernists, superficial postmodernists, and persons who display postmodernist attitudes.

<sup>31</sup> Both modern and postmodern thought use the concept of “worldview”, but in different ways. For modern thought, starting with Immanuel Kant, a worldview, or *Weltanschauung* represented a comprehensive perspective on the world and human existence.

universal arguments for apologetics. They hold instead that the Christian apologist should master the strengths and weaknesses of the existing approaches (classical, evidential, presuppositional and experiential), employing each one as the context merits. They acknowledge that «every person will react and be reached differently, so there is no one approach that will work every time»<sup>32</sup>. House and Jowers' book is a serious attempt at renewing apologetics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it is deserving of attention. The authors' wholesale rejection of both modernity and postmodernity, though, seems to run counter to the prevailing Catholic proposal of an inculturated Christianity and an evangelized culture. A complete repudiation of postmodernity and a return to modern or pre-modern ways of thinking does not seem like a reasonable expectation. The authors, however, deserve praise for their concern to witness to various categories of people who are influenced more or less consciously by postmodernism.

A different approach is proposed by Pope Francis in the Foreword to the apostolic constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* on ecclesiastical universities and faculties (December 8, 2017). Harking back to Francis's programmatic apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (especially numbers 132-134), the Foreword to *Veritatis Gaudium* develops even further Francis's call for a 'creative apologetics' that helps to create the dispositions so that the Gospel be heard by all<sup>33</sup>. The four main lines of action that Francis proposes are first, the centrality of the *kerygma*, namely, the narrative of the mystery of salvation; second, wide-ranging dialogue; third, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to formation and research; and fourth, networking among institutions.

Nearly seven years have passed since Pope Francis entrusted the task of developing a new and creative apologetics to ecclesiastical universities,

Later modern thought broadened the notion to mean a comprehensive system of beliefs that provide a framework for understanding objective reality. Postmodern thought, however, emphasizes the social, cultural, and historical conditioning of worldview, affirming the plurality of worldviews and allows for multiple worldviews to coexist despite conflicting perspectives. The pattern of worldview analysis of House and Jowers is more closely aligned with postmodern techniques than with the modern concept of worldview.

<sup>32</sup> H. W. HOUSE - D.W. JOWERS, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium* 132. The official English translation is rather insipid: the "creative apologetics" would simply «encourage greater openness to the Gospel on the part of all». The Italian text is far more incisive: «Si tratta dell'incontro tra la fede, la ragione e le scienze, che mira a sviluppare un nuovo discorso sulla credibilità, un'apologetica originale che aiuti a creare le disposizioni perché il Vangelo sia ascoltato da tutti».

faculties, and institutes<sup>34</sup>. In this time, progress, if any, has been slow and barely perceptible. There is still no clear-cut proposal for a new approach to apologetics that rethinks this science from the ground up in a postmodern context.

In the end, if there is to be any hope for a renewed apologetics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it may be through an apologetics of hope. The creative apologetics that Pope Francis has called for needs to return to its roots in the Apostle's exhortation in 1 Pt 3:15. It is hard to say what this new apologetics will look like, but one may expect that it will emerge from a similar pattern as the one that produced classical apologetics. First, for a new Christian apologetics to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Christians need to be witnesses to an attitude of hope. No one will ask any Christians the reasons for their hope, if Christians display hopelessness in their daily lives. The witness to hope, today as two thousand years ago, must be the occasion which inspires others to ask for an account, an explanation for this hope. This, however, is only the beginning. The attitude of hope must produce narratives of hope. The postmodern world may doubt the existence of metanarratives, but postmodern people continue to be drawn to compelling narratives. One of the best ways of evangelizing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is through good storytelling, in which the great themes of creation and sin, grace and glory, are retold again and again through the vehicles of literature and art. Finally, the Christian account of hope is called to go beyond the merely fragmentary insights of witness, apt for each occasion but nothing more. A systematic apologetics of hope needs the firm support of a theology of hope, on the one hand, combined with the ability for constructive dialogue with postmodern preoccupations, on the other. Postmodernity poses new challenges and creates new opportunities. New sets of questions require creative new approaches. A wide and exiting field of labor is open for exploration. The creation of a new apologetics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a task awaiting fulfillment, which calls for a new generation of scholars willing to undertake its risks and reap its rewards.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. A.V. ZANI, *Il ruolo delle università pontificie nell'evangelizzazione della cultura alla luce della Costituzione Veritatis Gaudium* in «Alpha Omega», XXII/2, 2019, pp. 231-250.