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**GIVING A REASON FOR OUR HOPE:
ADVENTISTS AND APOLOGETICS**

Humberto M. Rasi, Ph.D.
Institute for Christian Teaching

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*If anybody asks why you believe as you do,
be ready to tell him, and do it in a gentle
and respectful way. - 1 Peter 3:15, LB*

Scenario 1: In his first lecture for a science course your university professor presents an eloquent defense of evolution and speaks disparagingly of what he calls "red-neck creationists and misguided promoters of so-called Intelligent Design." You and your classmates keep taking notes as some snickers are heard. As you silently file out of the lecture hall, one of your fellow students asks, "What do you think of evolution?"

Scenario 2: During a lunch break at a convention, a colleague notices your menu selection and asks if you're vegetarian. As you discuss the presentations, he asks what you think of a panel discussion that has taken place on Saturday. As the friendly discussion ensues, he observes, "I think you're a smart person. So, why do you believe in God?"

Scenario 3: Your seatmate on a long flight is devouring the best-seller *The Da Vinci Code*. In the meantime, you've been reading and underlining a Christian journal. Your fellow traveler turns to you and asks, "Have you read this book? The author says Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that this fact was suppressed by Christian leaders. He also says the divinity of Christ was invented by the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. This is amazing!"

How would you respond to these questions?

* * * * *

Over the centuries, God's followers have fought their crucial battles on the terrain of the human mind. It is in this arena that arguments are weighed, conclusions are reached, and crucial decisions made. This is where reason and will are engaged.

Jesus was well aware of the tremendous potential for ideas to reach and change us. "You will know the truth," He said, "and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).¹ And he added, "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

Adventists, particularly those who attend public colleges and universities or are engaged in professional careers, regularly face questions regarding their beliefs, convictions, and lifestyle. These queries are posed by fellow Christians as well as by atheists, agnostics, and adepts of other world religions.

We usually respond to these questions by offering rational arguments, providing evidence, or quoting Scripture, depending on the circumstance. We also pray silently that the Holy Spirit grant us supernatural help in offering an answer that will eventually lead others "into all truth" (John 16:13). Whenever we give reasons for our beliefs, we engage in a 2000-year-old activity validated by believers through the centuries-Christian apologetics.

In this essay we will seek to: (1) understand Bible-anchored apologetics as a valuable strategy for Christian witness; (2) examine the approach used by New Testament authors in explaining and defending core Christian beliefs; (3) outline the biblical mandate and method for doing apologetics, while acknowledging its limits; (4) review and evaluate Adventist involvement in apologetics; and (5) propose an agenda for the future.

Toward a definition

The word *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which originally meant a speech of defense or an answer given in reply to a legal query, usually during a judicial procedure. Adopted by the early Christians, the word was used eight times in the New Testament, mostly by Paul, either as a noun (*apologia*) or a verb (*apologeomai*) to

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible passages are quoted from the New International Version.

communicate the sense of defense or vindication.² At its core, this defense centered on the person of Jesus Christ--His divinity and humanity, His death and resurrection, His forgiveness and promise of eternal life beyond the tomb, and the certain hope of His return in glory.

The New Testament provides several examples of apologetics in varied settings. For example, as a response to persecution (1 Peter 3:8-18), as a deliberate argument before a hostile religious audience (Acts 17:1-9), as a speech in front of an educated but skeptical group (Acts 17:16-34), as a humble spiritual demonstration (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), as a personal defense of a consistent Christian witness (1 Corinthians 9:19-23), as a strong correction of spiritual error, misbehavior, and abuse of authority (2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Jude 3), and as a personal witness for the truth of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-4; John 20:30).³

During the second century of the Christian era, the noun *apologia* and the verb *apologeomai* began to acquire a more technical sense. The word apologists was then used to refer to a group of expositors who defended Christian beliefs and practices against various attacks, including the charges of illegal and immoral activities.

Since the early 1800s, apologetics has been considered a discipline with various specialized branches, all defending the Christian faith from various perspectives--ethical, historical, philosophical, religious, scientific, or theological.

In its broader sense, apologetics has three dimensions. It is (1) a rational explanation of core Christian beliefs and teachings based on arguments and evidence; (2) a defense of Christianity in response to objections and criticisms; and (3) a challenge to and a refutation of opposing systems or deviant ideologies. In its first dimension,

² New Testament passages in which the words *apologia* or *apologeomai* are used include:

Acts 22:1	"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my <i>defense</i> ."
Acts 25:16	"...an opportunity to <i>defend himself</i> against their charges"
1 Corinthians 9:3	"This is my <i>defense</i> to those who sit in judgment of me"
2 Corinthians 7:11	"...what eagerness to <i>clear</i> ourselves"
Philippians 1:7	"...whether I am in chains or <i>defending</i> and confirming the gospel"
Philippians 1:16	"...knowing that I am put here for <i>the defense</i> of the gospel"
2 Timothy 4:16	"At my first <i>defense</i> , no one came to my support"
1 Peter 3:15	"Always be prepared to <i>give an answer</i> to everyone who asks you..."

³ See James W. Sire, *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2006), pp. 14-25.

apologetics shows that Christianity is reasonable. In its second dimension, it demonstrates that Christianity is not unreasonable. In the third dimension, apologetics shows that non-Christian thought is unreasonable.

James W. Sire, an experienced evangelical apologist, offers this definition:

Christian apologetics lays before the watching world such a winsome embodiment of the Christian faith that for any and all who are willing to observe there will be an intellectually and emotionally credible witness to its fundamental truth.⁴

New Testament apologetics

A careful reading of the New Testament books reveals that early on, in addition to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, "the infant church carried out her apologetical encounter with Judaism, with paganism, and with deviant tendencies that arose within the Christian community."⁵

Although the four gospel writers were primarily concerned with telling the story of Jesus, it is possible to detect in the background a desire to answer and perhaps even anticipate questions and objections from Christian believers, honest inquirers, and cynical opponents. These questions included: Wasn't the Messiah supposed to be not only a direct descendant of David but also a native and resident of Bethlehem? Did He really perform miracles that were witnessed by others? Why wasn't Jesus recognized as the Messiah even by His followers and why was He rejected and ultimately condemned by the religious authorities? Why was Judas chosen as a disciple, when Jesus knew he would betray Him? Why did Jesus have to suffer a common criminal's death on a cross? Is there sufficient evidence that He actually died and came back to life on the third day? Where did Jesus go after His ascension and why did he go there? Why hasn't He returned as promised? Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John carefully provide answers to these and other key questions, taking into consideration the audience to which their writings are principally addressed.

⁴ Sire, *A Little Primer*, p. 26.

⁵ Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 2nd edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 1 and following.

In the book of Acts, Luke depicts the apologetic approach used by the apostles and other early Christian leaders as the church begins to expand its reach during the second half of the first century. Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin outlines the arguments used by the fledgling movement as it confronts the Jewish establishment. Peter's sermon at Pentecost and his speech in the house of Cornelius reveals a Christianity whose scope is broadening.

As Luke accompanies Paul on his missionary trips that reach ever deeper into the Roman territory, Christianity engages the pagans of Lystra, the cultured Greeks of Athens and the pragmatic Romans. During these encounters and in repeated conflicts with Jewish believers, Paul emerges as a powerful apologist for the living Christ and the truth of the gospel. His epistles reveal a committed mind, a masterful use of language, and a deep understanding of Jewish, Greek, and Roman culture—all of which is used firstly, to explain and defend Christianity, and secondly, to offer a powerful critique of Christian heresies and non-Christian worldviews. He writes forcefully,

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Finally, the letter addressed to the Hebrews presents an articulate defense of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and as the perfect sacrifice and mediator between humans and God. Christianity thus becomes the true religion, superseding Judaism.

Mandate and method

A key New Testament passage provides the mandate and outlines the method for Christian apologetics. We find it in 1 Peter 3:15 and it is worth quoting it in the context of the previous and following verse:

Do not be frightened. But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ

may be ashamed of their slander.

Let's unpack the key components of this passage:

- *Be prepared*: An essential part of our witness and proclamation of God's truth is to study, anticipate, plan, and be ready. Firmly anchored in God's Word, we must be familiar with the prevalent ideas of our time and the arguments that may be used against biblical Christianity. Before getting deep into the subject, we must know the background of the person or person we are addressing.
- *Give reasons*: The Greek word used in the original is *logos*, which the RSV translates as "account for," implying a rational explanation that can be understood and evaluated. Our arguments must be consistent and based on reasonable evidence.
- *About our faith commitments*: The "Christian hope" centers on the person of Jesus Christ, His divinity, the truth of His existence, and the reliability of His promises.
- *To anyone who asks*: This includes the entire range of individuals, from the honest seeker to the critic, from the simple to the keenest mind.
- *But do it with gentleness*: Convictions must be presented with respect. We must also be open to dialogue. Truth may be rejected simply because it is communicated in an arrogant or condescending manner.⁶
- *Be consistent*: In order to be effective, our words and our lives must match up.
- *Exalt Christ*: The ultimate purpose in our interaction is to lead our listener or challenger to know and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

A review of the examples found in the Bible reveals that the method used by the apologist varies according to the situation and the context. The explanation and defense of the truths of Christianity may take place in a private conversation, as a lecture in an educational setting, as a public debate or in writing. The audience may be friendly, curious, or hostile, or a mixture of the three. Thus, the argumentation and rhetoric employed will vary according to the circumstances.

⁶ See James W. Sire, *Why Good Arguments Often Fail: Making a More Persuasive Case for Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

A case study: Paul speaks at Mars Hill

In Acts 17 we find a useful example of a Christian apologetics address given by a leading missionary and intellectual. Although recorded in summary form, the passage provides an outline (vv. 16-34) for any believer given the opportunity to present the message of Jesus Christ to an educated, curious, and possibly hostile audience.

Around the year 60 A.D., Paul and his companions entered Europe bringing the gospel to Jews and non-Jews. After addressing various groups in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, they had arrived in Athens. Although no longer the Western world's undisputed center of art, letters, and philosophy, the city was still a thriving commercial and intellectual metropolis.

Paul's presentation may be outlined in the following manner:

1. Background

- The motivation (v. 16): Paul is touched by the many evidences of idol worship in the city and the need of its inhabitants to hear about the true God. According to a contemporary source, there were more than 3,000 deities worshipped in Athens.
- Getting acquainted with the cultural context (vv. 17, 18): After addressing the Jews in their synagogue and other believers, the apostle goes to the marketplace to interact with the common people.
- In contact with the intellectual elite (vv. 18-21): The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debate him and become curious about his unusual ideas. So they extend an invitation to present his philosophy to a select group of educated Athenians with very different worldviews.

2. The address

- Building a bridge of understanding (vv. 22, 23): Paul establishes contact with his audience by praising them for their interest in religious matters and awakens their curiosity by referring to the altar devoted to an unknown god.
- Characteristics of the true God (vv. 23-28): This unknown god is the Creator of everything that exists in the universe. He made all human beings as part of one family, sustains them with His power, and has delimited their habitats. He is

accessible to anyone who wants to find him. In fact, some Greek poets referred to this God.

- Implications of these facts (vv. 29-31): This living God does not need to be represented by material objects. He understands our condition and one day will judge all humans through a person He brought back from the dead.

3. The audience's reaction

- Some scoffed (v. 32), rejecting the preposterous idea that a person could be resurrected.
- Some were willing to hear more about the subject at another occasion (v. 32).
- Some were persuaded by the arguments and became Christian believers (vv. 33, 34).

The value of apologetics

At its best, apologetics seeks to eliminate obstacles, open avenues of understanding, and persuade people of the truth and credibility of the Christian faith. Ultimately, the believer engaging in apologetics wants to help non-Christians commit their lives to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and behave in ways consistent with that commitment.⁷

Biblical Christianity's claims set itself apart from non-Christian theists, such as Jews and Moslems. The differences center mostly on the person of Jesus Christ. They find it difficult to believe that He is God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, who became incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, who died and resurrected, who offers salvation to those who accept Him, and who will come again in glory to this world. Agnostics and atheists, on the other hand, not only deny that God exists, but also that He created the universe, communicates with human beings in various ways, performs miracles, and will grant eternal life to those who believe and trust in Him.

⁷ See Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2001), pp. 17-22.

Obviously, Christian apologetics is not for the soft-minded or weak-hearted! It demands deep reflection, continuing study, and humble courage. In addition, rational arguments that provide support for biblical faith are also valuable for Christians whenever they have sincere intellectual questions about core Christian beliefs. And this is a common occurrence among thoughtful Christians. Such arguments, however, are not proofs or demonstrations that would compel all rational people that God exists or that Christianity is true. Nonetheless, they provide evidence that the Biblical-Christian worldview is coherent, believable, and more reasonable than its competitors.

In summary, engaging in apologetics helps establish the faith of Christian believers and provides them with arguments to explain and defend their convictions as they interact with seekers, skeptics, critics, and followers of other religions. Apologetics compels Christians to master the biblical worldview, to understand and be able to critique the culture that surrounds them, and, in a foreign missionary setting, to become well acquainted with the culture and worldview of those to whom they wish to bring a saving knowledge of the gospel.

Adventists and apologetics

Christian apologetics has not been a popular word or concept among Seventh-day Adventists. It is not taught as a subject in our colleges, seminaries, or universities. Yet in our 140-year history as an organized Christian movement, we have been engaging in apologetics all along, in the broad sense of the word.

Our history begins as we attempt to understand the application of Bible prophecy regarding the end of time. The Millerites, our immediate spiritual ancestors, applied rational methods to interpret God's Word, comparing Scripture with Scripture. We inherited from them a tendency to interpret the Bible logically, seeking to apply its implications to real life. This attitude led to sustained internal discussions, which caused our pioneers to modify some of our initial understanding of the Biblical message.

Whenever we conduct public evangelism or engage in personal Bible studies, we use apologetic methods to explain and defend the reliability of the Scriptures as God's revelation and the historicity of Christ, with an attempt to lead our listeners to accept Him as Savior and Lord. When we hold formal meetings with theologians and leaders of other

Christian traditions, we use logical and historical arguments to explain and defend our understanding of God's revelation.

Two institutes operated by the Adventist Church were established with similar purposes. The Biblical Research Institute, according to their website, "exists to answer and expound on questions of doctrine for Seventh-day Adventists and for those interested in Adventist beliefs" (www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org). And the Geoscience Research Institute, founded in 1958, has as its mission is "to discover and share an understanding of nature and its relationship with the biblical revelation of the Creator God" (website: www.grisda.org).

It is also instructive to review the books written by Adventist authors in English explaining and defending our central beliefs. (See Appendix 3 - A Thematic Bibliography of Adventist Apologetical Works.) The preferred topics of Adventist authors are clear: The Bible and its interpretation, Adventist teachings, Creation, the Seventh-day Sabbath, Bible prophecy and the Second Coming of Christ, and the writings of Ellen G. White. With the exception of the books dealing with the origin of life and the defense of Creation, the intended readers of these works consist mostly of Adventists and other Christians who accept the Bible as an inspired document. We also note that the majority of these volumes have been produced and distributed by Adventist publishing houses, a factor that limits their circulation and access to a larger audience.

Consequently, Adventist students attending public colleges and universities or Adventist professionals seeking to answer basic questions about the existence of God, the reliability of the Scriptures, or the reasonableness of Christian core beliefs are obligated to find their arguments in materials produced by Christians of other faith traditions.

The limits of apologetics

Adventists engaged in the explanation and the defense of their faith commitments need to recognize the limits of apologetics. Rational arguments cannot serve as the foundation of belief. Neither will such arguments necessarily bring non-believers to faith.⁸ "A Christ-like life--wrote Ellen White--is the most powerful argument that can be

⁸ Paul's address to the Greek philosophers in Mars Hill brought some results, since "a few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus,

advanced in favor of Christianity... Not all the books written can serve the purpose of a holy life."⁹ Moreover, in our natural condition we are unwilling to submit ourselves to God. Were it not for the subtle but powerful influence of the Holy Spirit we would not recognize our lostness and our desperate need of a Savior. That was precisely why Jesus came to this world-"to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10, RSV).

Nonetheless, apologetics can help create the context for respectful dialogue and can aid in the building of bridges of understanding with seekers. Thoughtful apologetics can also strengthen Adventists by fostering inquiry and removing obstacles to the development of a deeper, more mature faith. Ellen White wrote: "The truths of the divine word can be best appreciated by an intellectual Christian. Christ can be best glorified by those who serve Him intelligently."¹⁰ However, our worldview and our arguments should be anchored on the Scriptures, which are divine revelation for human beings of all times. We must also be centered Christians, avoiding the extremes of rationalism and emotionalism--lifeless disputes and unreliable feelings.

When it is solidly based on the Scriptures, reason is not an enemy of faith and can instead be a strong ally. God Himself created us with the ability to think and to choose. Jesus declared that "the first and greatest commandment" required loving God with all our "mind" (See Matthew 22:37, 38; also Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27). A consecrated Christian life involves submitting all we are to Jesus, who is Truth. Loving God implies obeying His will, which must be understood rationally in order to act upon it.

In addition, "reason at least has veto power. We can't believe what we know to be untrue, and we can't love what we believe to be unreal. Arguments may not bring you to faith, but they can certainly keep you away from faith. Therefore we must join the battle

also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others" (Acts 17:16-34). However, Paul was aware of the limits of argumentation: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.... Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:18, 20-25).

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), p. 21.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 160.

of arguments."¹¹ James E. Taylor, a contemporary Christian apologist, recommends finding a middle ground between overemphasis on reason and overemphasis on faith:

Too much confidence in reason may lead to doubt or unbelief because no combination of arguments and evidences can prove conclusively that God exists or that Christianity is true.... However, too much emphasis on faith to the exclusion of reason may also lead to doubt or unbelief because there a legitimate questions of an intellectual sort about Christianity, such as the problem of evil or the problem of religious pluralism, that trouble sincere believers and seekers.¹²

Ultimately, the various factors that lead a person to commit his or her life to Christ are beyond human comprehension and control. They usually involve a combination of personal experiences, human relationships, cumulative rational evidences, the intercessory prayer of friends, and the ever-present, powerful influence of the Holy Spirit.

The task ahead

Western civilization is experiencing a deep crisis of truth. The idea of objective truth is being attacked or completely abandoned in our postmodern culture. Multiple creeds and ideologies compete with biblical Christianity. There is increasing ignorance of God's Word, and when there is knowledge of it, we frequently find apathy. At its deepest level the crisis of our time is spiritual.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is losing thousands of its brightest young adults as they study in public colleges and universities or pursue careers in secular settings. It seems that we do not prepare them well to explain and defend their biblical convictions or point out the weaknesses of opposing worldviews and ideologies. Perhaps our approach is too narrow or too superficial. Our schools would do well to train them better in logical and critical thinking, acquaint them with the current ideas that oppose

¹¹ Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 21.

¹² James E. Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics: Cultivating Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 12. See also my article "Faith, Reason, and the Educated Christian," *College and University Dialogue* 15:3 (2003), pp. 5-9, 16.

biblical Christianity, and both prepare and encourage them to answer opposing arguments. They need to be able to argue for the truths of Christianity and the solidity of Adventist beliefs in the give-and-take of real life.

Materials prepared by and for Adventists will also be useful in this important task. For example, a handbook on Adventist apologetics would be helpful to these students and also to Adventist professionals who wish to have at hand ready answers to questions about their faith.

In addition, we must provide stronger support to Adventist scholars who, starting from a commitment to the Scriptures, investigate areas of knowledge that sharpen our case in favor of truth. Their work will assist us in reaching out to followers of other faiths and strengthen the case for biblical Christianity.¹³

As Adventist mission takes us deeper into non-Christian territories of the planet, we would do well to acquaint ourselves better with the beliefs of other world religions and refine our approaches to their followers. Centers sponsored by Global Mission are beginning to help us in this ambitious undertaking.

Ultimately, our struggle as Seventh-day Adventists is against secular unbelief and misguided beliefs, not against the atheists, agnostics, adepts of other religions, or heretics themselves. In fact, by God's grace, each of them is a potential citizen of the new kingdom that Christ will establish. Our respect for individuals created in the image of God must lead us to polish our arguments and invigorate our outreach. Without apology, we should be always ready to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3).

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¹³ Interested readers are invited to read a statement on "Seventh-day Adventists and Scholarship" in the website of The Foundation for Adventist Education: <http://fae.adventist.org>.

APPENDIX 1

The Apologist's Evening Prayer

From all my lame defeats and oh! much more
 From all the victories that I seemed to score;
 From cleverness shot forth on Thy behalf
 At which, while angels weep, the audience laugh;
 From all my proofs of Thy divinity,
 Thou, who wouldst give no sign, deliver me.

Thoughts are but coins. Let me not trust, instead
 Of Thee, their thin-worn image of Thy head:
 From all my thoughts, even from my thoughts of Thee,
 O thou fair Silence, fall, and set me free.
 Lord of the narrow gate and needle's eye,
 Take from me all my trumpery lest I die.

-- C. S. Lewis

Poems, edited by Walter Hooper, London: G. Bles, 1964

APPENDIX 2

Paul speaks at the university*

Men and women of the university, I see that in every way you are very religious. As I walked around the university, I observed carefully your objects of worship. I saw your altar called the stadium where many of you worship the sports deity. I saw the science building where many place their faith for the salvation of mankind. I found your altar to the fine arts where artistic expression and performance seem to reign supreme without subservience to any greater power. I walked through your residence halls and observed your sex goddess posters and beer can pyramids. Yet as I walked with some of you and saw the emptiness in your eyes and sensed the aching in your hearts, I perceived that in your heart is yet another altar, an altar to the unknown God who you suspect may be there. You have a sense that there is something more than these humanistic and self-indulgent gods. What you long for as something unknown, I want to declare to you now.

This God I am speaking of is your personal creator. He is not a fabrication or invention of mankind. He is not a part of creation; he stands above it. He is greater and more powerful than you have ever dreamed. This God has given you your life, and has set the boundaries of your life. The longing for eternity in your heart was placed there by him. You may try to grope for him, but he is already intimately involved in the creation. It is his creative work in you, his image, that makes it possible for you to engage in athletic activities, scientific endeavor, artistic expression, and even playfulness and sexual pleasure.

But this God is calling you to repent. You have worshiped your own creativity instead of acknowledging him as your creator. You have forgotten the giver of the gifts. You have rebelled against your creator and gone your own way of self-indulgence and self-worship. As a result you have perverted the gifts of life and creativity. You have abused your sexuality through careless indulgence. You have chosen the way of futility and death. God calls you to turn from serving these false gods and to bring glory to the living and true God, your creator.

God has sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save and judge the world. The man Jesus has come to set things right, to bring justice, to call us back as a warning before judgment. By his death he offers a way back to God, to save us from self-destruction. By his resurrection he has shown that he has come with power to save and judge the world. As a result, this Jesus has become the pivotal point in history, the central issue for us today, either the stepping stone or the stumbling block. He offers reconciliation with the creator and he alone can give it.

*This paraphrase of Acts 17:22-31 was written by Daniel Denk and is excerpted from *Why Good Arguments Often Fail*, by James W. Sire (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006), pp. 142, 143.

APPENDIX 3

A Thematic Bibliography of Adventist Apologetical Works

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