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Ubuntu Apologetics in Faith Formation

An Ethnography of Youth Ministry in Nairobi

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Abstract

Faith formation is a crucial area in youth ministry. Although the area of apologetics may be a helpful bridge, the theory and praxis of apologetics in the African context is scanty. The work of apologists such as William Lane Craig, John Frame, Ravi Zacharias, and John Lennox has responded to the post-Christian context of Europe and North America. Much needs to be done in light of the African contextual realities. Using a practical theological methodology, this paper considers how *ubuntu* apologetics – which honors both the cognitive and affective development of adolescents – can lead to holistic faith formation of African youth. This research paper will 1) consider youth ministry contextual realities in Kenya and Africa; 2) analyze foundational methods of apologetics; 3) utilize an ethnographic methodology in analyzing the data and 4) offer recommendations for youth ministry education and practice in Nairobi and Africa at large.

Keywords

adolescent development – apologetics – contextualization – emerging adulthood – ethnography – faith formation – practical theology – qualitative research – ubuntu – youth ministry

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1 Introduction

Millennials and the Church. This is the pressing concern for Christian practitioners in the global world. In the African context, this target group (Age 15–35 years) comprises the largest population in the continent with an approximate number of 200 million people. They can be described as urban, black, rural, African traditional and white millennials, given the multicultural context of the African continent (Knoetze 2017:1). Noting the lack of a theological foundation in youth ministry, Knoetze looks at how discipleship and spiritual formation for children and youth should take center stage in a continent that is at once traditional, modern, and postmodern (Knoetze 2015). Elsewhere he notes that economic, political, and cultural systems have marginalized African millennials and thereby presented a challenge for the Church in responding effectively to this pertinent target group (Knoetze 2018:6). The reality of millennials being disillusioned about the Church merits a holistic assessment that considers their faith formation. The author offers "ubuntu apologetics" as an approach to youth ministry. This approach understands the young person within an African worldview of *ubuntu,* that is, as a person within the interconnection of relationships. The outcome is that this approach seeks to integrate two aspects of the human person that are sometimes dichotomized through traditional apologetic methods: the affective and the cognitive.

Should youth ministry help young people transition safely into adulthood or should youth ministry help young people to mature in their understanding of the Christian faith? Put another way, should youth ministry primarily be concerned about the emotional and psycho-social well-being of young people or should it seek biblical fidelity in terms of doctrinal understanding and evangelistic witness? A survey of youth ministry literature seems to focus singlehandedly on one of the two. Yaconelli (2006:22) for instance proposes that "we need to move beyond words. We have to share not only the teachings of Jesus but more importantly the presence of Jesus". This contemplative approach is focused on the Christian mystical tradition of being alert, aware and present to young people so as to journey effectively with them. Such an approach is merited especially in a socio-economic and political milieu where young people are alienated, as Giroux (2009:31) observes, "young people have become a generation of suspects in a society destroyed by the merging of market fundamentalism, consumerism, and militarism" and their guardians continue to respond with indifference, disrespect, and abandon. This relational approach is also important within a post-COVID context, where the mental health of young people has been severely affected.

On the other hand, much of what is assumed as biblical convictions in youth ministry is a fundamentalist approach that fails to engage young people at a

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cognitive level. In a research conducted among approximately 100 young people who have left the church, some of the reasons given were church leadership being hypocritical, the challenge of different worldviews and inability to reconcile God's goodness and suffering in their own lives (Muriithi 2015). Weber (2015) observes several similar studies in faith formation. These four major global studies done around the theme of faith formation among young people note the problem of Christian language "Christianese" as one of the issues.[1] In other words, young people require an understanding of what their faith means in a manner that they can own, and this is the basis for a relational approach to apologetics. All this is aggravated by the postmodern and postcolonial context that Africa finds herself in. While many Christian apologists have made headway in clarifying Christian convictions, much is yet to trickle down to African youth who would benefit the most from the field of apologetics.

2 The Context of Study: Apologetics & Youth Ministry in Kenya

In the Kenyan context, several apologetics organizations or ministries are present. With its tagline as "Life's Questions, God's Answers" the *Saturday PM* (a church based ministry affiliated with Christ is the Answer Ministries – CITAM) aims at using scripture-exposition as a means of "taking seriously the questions that people, and especially the younger generation and emerging leaders, have about the Christian faith."[2] The *Reuben Kigame Center for Christian Apologetics* was founded by a Kenyan gospel artist and minister, Reuben Kigame whose purpose is to engage in apologetics research and ministry through the classical

1 The four studies include: Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, two American sociology professors at the University of North Carolina, who conducted a survey on the character of youth religion in America in 2001–2005 focusing on 13–17 year olds incorporating 3,290 telephonic interviews and 267 individual face-to-face interviews; Kara Powell, Brad Griffin and Cheryl Crawford of the Fuller Youth Institute from 2004 to 2010 using longitudinal surveys among 500 youth pastors and 28 interdenominational churches; Hendrik Pieterse, Johannes van der Ven, and Jaco Dreyer, from Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, and the University of South Africa (UNISA), respectively, who jointly conducted a quantitative large-scale empirical-theological research project on 'Religion and Human Rights among South African Youth' through 2 surveys in selected private and public schools in the Pretoria and Johannesburg area in 1995–1996 and in 2000–2002, each time involving the same schools on Christian belief; and lastly, Shantelle Weber who conducted a research study in 2008 and 2012 in order to understand youth faith formation in light of possible factors that could hinder and enhance the faith formation process among 14–17 year olds in 8 local congregations. See the findings of these studies in Shantelle Weber, "A (South) African Voice on Youth Ministry Research: Powerful or Powerless?" *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71.2 (2015). http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v71i2.2973.

2 The Saturday PM, http://thesaturdaypm.com/about.

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method. *African Center for Apologetics Research* (AFCAR) focuses mainly on apologetics research with particular focus on cult evangelism in East Africa through equipping Christians with discernment and defense of the gospel. They are part of the global partnerships of centers for Apologetics Research. *Apologetics Kenya* holds monthly meetings through lectures and small groups with the aim of equipping believers to engage with differing worldviews. The basis of doing this is the postmodern and postcolonial context of 21st century Africa.[3] The apologetics landscape in Kenya combines denominations, churches, parachurches, and urban contexts in a manner that indicates great promise. According to the author, incorporating an African "relational approach" in these apologetics ministries can bring greater effectiveness.

The point that I am making is that there is need of synthesizing once again the cognitive and affective aspects within the contextual realities of real ministerial challenges in Kenya. Let me offer several suggestions why this is crucial in Kenya and Africa at large:

1) *The need for holistic youth ministry:* The African context is certainly religiously diverse and pluralistic. In addition to this, the socio-economic context and political landscape presents specific challenges to youth ministry. For one, how can we minister to young people who come from economically challenged backgrounds? The theological convictions of such a group of young people may be informed by real-life concerns, such that their experience of systematic suffering eschews a western model of theodicy. This is the same case made by Arzola (2008) when he reconsiders the context of inner-city Latin-American youth to propose a "prophetic youth ministry" that bridges gospel growth, social justice, and personal development. The implication of this for youth discipleship, preaching and programming are immense. Keller (2015:20) notes that in the age of postmodern skepticism, preaching for instance must be rooted in context: "To reach people gospel preachers must challenge the culture's story at points of confrontation and finally retell the culture's story, as it were, revealing how its deepest aspirations for good can be fulfilled only in Christ." An African understanding of *ubuntu* grants this contextual "seeing" whereby young people are understood within a diverse interconnection of factors such as guardians, experiences, environment, cognition, and affection.
2) *Pluralism and the fragmentation of worldviews among millennials:* In addition to the local reality of youth ministries, the global culture and youth

3 See AFCAR's mission http://www.acfar.org/vision-for-uganda-cult-ministry.aspx and Apologetics Kenya's here: https://www.facebook.com/ApologeticsKenya/.

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culture to be specific cannot be ignored. Noting the transcendence of the "virtual reality" of the internet, Rishmawy (2018) proposes an apologetics approach that can engage late modernism's effects of individualism and worldviews that leave millennials "fragilized and destabilized".[4] Pluralism is exasperated in Africa as well due to the proliferation of mobile technologies and access to the internet. How will youth ministries effectively serve young people who have no epistemological structures for authority, truth, tradition, and institutions? If the Word of God is unchanging and true for every generation, the role of apologetics is important.

3) *Syncretism of African Traditional practices that are antithetical to Biblical faith:* Recently (2018), within the circles of a particular denomination, the highest leadership organ passed a motion on restricting the resurgence of the traditional practice of *mbũrĩ cia kiama* (goats for initiation into the council of elders). This practice facilitated the transition of men within the hierarchical structure of this particular traditional culture. The restriction was based on the fact that this age-old practice was interpreted as having religious motifs that clash with biblical Christianity. Some antagonists see the practice as filling a much-needed gap for fellowship and mentorship among the Men's Fellowship – especially given that the mission Christianity inherited did not consider transitory rites of passage for boys and men. There have been some positive solutions within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa such as the Rites of Passage (ROPES) Programme whereby some churches have used the initiatory rites of circumcision among boys as an opportunity for spiritual mentorship. However, when some of the other excessive practices are inculturated too quickly without theological reflection, the syncretism may weaken Christian witness among African Christians. Some practitioners such as Mbewe (2015) have also drawn some similarities between the "cult-heroism" of prosperity preachers with African spiritual worldview: "I think that one reason why the charismatic movement in Africa has been like a wild bushfire is because it has not challenged the African religious worldview but has instead adopted it. It has simply baptized it with Bible verses and Christian words that previously meant something totally different." In the aesthetics and material culture of Africans, the trends reveal a cultural shift towards Afrocentrism. These include millennials

4 John S. Feinberg defines the Modern Period as "belief in reason and progress" and outlines the central tenets of this period as human consciousness, certainty in knowledge, the importance of foundationalism, metanarratives, and the objectivity of truth. See John S. Feinberg, *Can You Believe Its True: Christian Apologetics in a Modern and Postmodern Era* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 38–50.

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adorning African printed design and watching African themed movies such as *Black Panther*. In North America, this has found a home in groupings such as *The Five-Percent Nation*, *The Nation of Islam*, and *Black Hebrew Israelites*. How will youth ministry within these global contexts respond to the resurgence of ancient traditions? Might there be a new need for assessing the continuities and discontinuities between Christianity and African tradition, much like the post-colonial African theologians and practitioners such as Kwame Bediako, John Mbiti, Byang Kato and Paul Bowers did?

4) *Islamic radicalization that takes advantage of "suspect youth"*: The effect of consumerism and its constraints on youth ministry is articulated well by Mahan, Warren & White (2008). Within urban and cosmopolitan African cities that are influenced by a consumeristic appeal more than the African concept of community, youth marginalization can be entrenched. Some scholars have noted how Islamic extremism offers financial advantages for young people who are desperate. Therefore, a gospel-centered hope for these young people is necessary to restore them. For such young people, apologetics must embrace a relational approach that sees them as holistic human beings with cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects.

The youth ministry challenges in 21st century Africa are numerous. While quantitatively, African Christianity is making progress, relational apologetics will be important in ensuring that qualitatively, there is depth in African Christianity. Such an approach must make the most of the apologetics methods inherited from the West, as they are very helpful, but combine them with an African worldview approach that takes seriously "community hermeneutics". The next section will briefly survey some of the methods in apologetics.

3 Literature Survey: Definitions and Methods in Apologetics

Apologetics is more than apologizing. *Apologia* is the Greek word for Apologetics that is found in 1 Peter 3:15 and various New Testament texts (Acts 17:1–4, 22:1, 25:16; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 7:11; Phil 1:7, 1:17; 2 Tim 4:16). In these texts and in the history of apologetics in Church history, the purposes of apologetics are enumerated as: first, a defense of the gospel with particular reference to critics of Christianity from other religions and worldviews; second, a response to the political powers that marginalized the Christian faith and third, as a polemical strategy within the diverse family of Christian denominations. The approaches of the apostles, church fathers and reformers can be borrowed for the contemporary global contexts. Lotter and Thompson (2005) for instance trace the

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Greco-Roman Aeropagus to postmodern *agora* or marketplace, which is characterized by a shallow biblical worldview. They suggest that through understanding the postmodern worldview, utilizing apologetics may enhance gospel ministry in modern cities.

Several definitions of apologetics have been proposed by Christian scholars. Craig (2008:15) defines apologetics as a branch of theology concerned with "the rational justification of truth claims of the Christian faith . . . primarily a theoretical discipline, though it has practical application." Sproul, Gerstner and Lindsley (1984:13) suggest that "Apologetics is the reasoned defense of the Christian religion." Frame (1994) defines apologetics as "the discipline that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope." Baucham (2015:20) defines it as "knowing what we believe and why we believe it and being able to communicate that to others effectively." All these definitions take the intellectual aspect seriously but seem to be limited only to the cognitive level, with the exception of Baucham who notes the necessity of communication. In essence, while obstacles to Christian belief are intellectual in nature, if we are to take the noetic effects of sin seriously, then even the affections have a place in apologetics. For instance, someone who struggles with the problem of theodicy not only struggles with it at an intellectual level but may also be struggling with the loss of a loved one on an affective level. Thus, theodicy merits both an intellectual and emotive response (Moreland & Craig 2003).

Definitions of apologetics consequently affect methods of apologetics. The most thorough treatment of apologetic methods is by Cowan (2000) in his *Five Views of Apologetics.* This paper will limit the discussion to three methods which I think are an all-encompassing umbrella for the five. The three schools include *the classical method, the presuppositional method* and *the evidential method.* The classical method emphasizes the use of *reason* or *natural revelation*, the presuppositional method emphasizes *special revelation* while the *evidential method* emphasizes the historical verification method. Some of the elements of the historical method involve multiple attestation by several testimonies, dissimilarity, and form criticism according to MacGregor (2014). The main critiques to each of the methods are that the classical method ignores the noetic effects of sin on human personality such that reason is irredeemable outside of Christ (Eph 2:1–3, 4:17–18; Col 3:1–3); the presuppositional method can be seen as limited to a *circular approach* that is self-defeating, and the evidential method utilizes a positivist approach that is a slave to the scientific milieu and its attendant worldview of *scientism.*[5] While reason, scripture and

5 John Frame sees all apologetic methods to be circular to some extent. Here is an extended quote: "Every philosophy must use its own standards in proving its conclusions; otherwise,

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history have their place, I want to suggest that taking a relational approach may best be suited for African millennials, even while utilizing some of these other methods.

4 Research Methodology: Ethnographic Surveys in Practical Theology

Although apologetics has been seen as an off shoot of systematics, in light of youth ministry, I am seeking to ground this paper in the domain of practical theology. My reasons are informed by Anderson's (2001:22) view of practical theology as a critical inquiry of praxis of youth ministry (as part of the Church) in the world (the four challenges earlier raised) in light of scripture, tradition, and other sources. Additionally, this paper has followed Osmer's (2008:4) practical theological method of moving from the what (current youth ministry practice) to the why (an interpretation of apologetic methods in view of African context) to the what ought to happen (scriptural exegesis) to the how (relational approach in theological education and youth ministry practice). Simply put, this project seeks to understand theology (in particular apologetics) in light of the everyday (that is, youth ministry in the Nairobian context), and as such this paper lends itself best to the domain of practical theology (Miller-McLemore 2012). I used a digital ethnographic survey to engage with particular contexts of youth ministry practitioners, across different Christian traditions who work with different groups of young people. Although the survey presented empirical statistics beneficial to the research, the qualitative nature of this ethnographic study bears much fruit with the view *to inscribe patterns, to give perspective, to interact and to take note*, which is the definition of ethnography according to Bochner and Ellis (2013).

4.1 *A Summary of the survey*

In 2018, I conducted a digital ethnographic survey among 50 Youth Ministry (YM) practitioners in Nairobi which presented the following summary findings:

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it is simply inconsistent. Those who believe that human reason is the ultimate authority (rationalists) must presuppose the authority of reason in their arguments for rationalism. Those who believe in the ultimacy of sense experience must presuppose it in arguing for their philosophy (empiricism). And skeptics must be skeptical of their own skepticism (a fact that is, of course, the Achilles' heel of skepticism). The point is that when one is arguing for an ultimate criterion, whether Scripture, the Koran, human reason, sensation, or whatever, one must use criteria compatible with that conclusion. If that is circularity, then everybody is guilty of circularity." See John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, 10.

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– 60% male and 40% female.
– 52% YM in mainline traditions, 24% evangelical, 24% charismatic/Pentecostal
– 49% of the practitioners were aged 26–35 years, 39.2% comprising 20–25 years and 11.8% above 35 years.
– 78.4% of them work with teenagers while 21.6% work with young adults.

4.2 *The Importance of Holistic Youth Ministry*

The most critical issue for African youth ministry according to the responses is for a holistic ministry to young people. A thirty-something year old youth worker observed "Young people want something practical that truly adds meaning and value in their lives." This emphasis on holistic faith formation is captured by the following infographic in figure 1.

Several youth workers noted the new circumstances affecting young people today: "Today's youth are open to all ideas, keen to learn and courageous enough to question life, religion and other things. The ability to encompass a gospel that is holistic, not just dos and don'ts or saying Bible stories as they are, is important for them. They need to have ready answers to biblical questions and not responses like 'you can't question God.'" From this response, we see the importance of the holistic approach to youth ministry that can help them

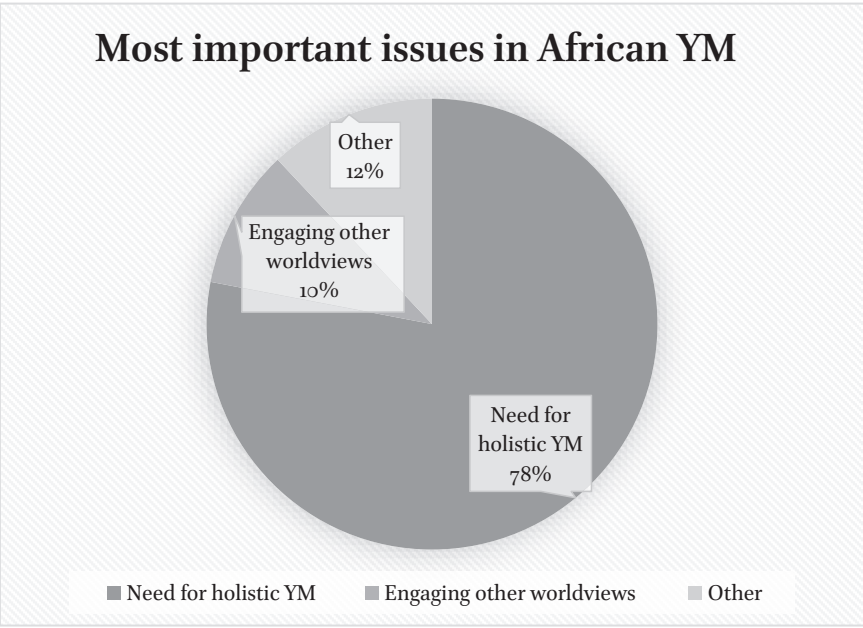


FIGURE 1 Critical Issues in African Youth Ministry

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to apply the gospel to all of life. This integration to all of life not only includes morality, but also public discourses, environment and economy as another youth worker observes:

> Most of the Christianity we have been introduced to since birth only deals with morality "*tabia mbaya*" [bad manners] kinda thing, but due to the internet youths are being exposed to different schools of thought on different issues of life that are not tackled in the christian circles e.g the environment, the economy etc.

4.3 *The Place of "Ubuntu Apologetics"*

The last question in the survey asked: "If apologetics was more relational, it would be more beneficial to my ministry". A majority of the youth workers, that is 72.5%, answered in the affirmative. 25.5% of them were unsure. Given that there was a small minority of 2% who answered in the negative, the significant portion taking a neutral position is curious. One could ask at this point is it because of the lack of training among youth workers in Africa thereby leading to a disinterest in apologetics? Is it because they have not come across applied apologetics in their ministry context? Are they only focused on the affective aspects of the young people under their care rather than a holistic concept? All these are valid questions that need further exploration. There is difficulty in answering one way or another without evidence and thus some of these critical questions present further areas of research. The reality is that from my youth ministry practice and networking, most youth workers are people who are passionate about young people but few of them have received theological education, let alone, apologetic education. Thus, one of the youth workers said, "I do not understand what that means". Secondly, this paper makes the argument for a more holistic approach to youth work that speaks to both the head and the heart, and hopefully inspires practical action. For the affirmative responses to the research question, the following comment offers a good summary:

> Absolutely! If all the topics discussed touched on things that people actually relate with, as well as empathize with the situations of people, the youth would be more enthusiastic to learn. In addition, apologetics seems rather scientific, with difficult terms and sometimes topics that are difficult to grasp. A relational explanation of things would definitely be a huge plus.

Youth practitioners are truly concerned for young people. And many have noted the initial observation from the literature concerning the over-emphasis

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of apologetics as a scientific approach. "Ubuntu apologetics" can bridge the gap by equipping youth ministers with the tools they need to grapple with ministry in view of the practical issues facing young people.

5 Implications and Conclusion

5.1 *Utilizing the Biblical Models of Relational Apologetics*

During a time when African millennials are characterized by an *angst,* a hunger for truth in a fragmented world, such vitality does not begin only from the top down but from the bottom up. Millennial angst may be effectively approached through viewing them as human persons. Whereas traditional apologetic methods begin from a place of intellectual imperialism, ubuntu apologetics must take into consideration the humanity of the persons involved. This relational apologetics is not short-sighted in its assumptions that Christian belief is not merely cognitive but considers how the affections play a role in Christian belief and practice, and how those affections are a factor of the environment that one belongs to. The Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft (1994:29–31) is helpful in articulating an understanding of faith on three levels: emotional, intellectual, and volitional. No wonder even in the *locus classicus* of apologetics 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle adds "with gentleness and respect." The Christian philosopher Dallas Willard (2015) interprets this relational aspect as follows:

> What does it mean that we are to be characterized by gentleness? To begin with, it means being humble. Love will purge us of any desire merely to win as well as of intellectual self-righteousness and contempt for the opinions and abilities of others. The apologist for Christ is one characterized by "humbleness of mind."

Apologetics in the manner of Jesus is worth our noting. The Kenyan Kigame (2018:470) reminds us that Christ-like apologetics must begin with "introspective apologetics" or "self-apologetics", which he likens to the spiritual surgery by God on the apologist and her thoughts, imaginations, convictions, motives and imaginations before engaging in any apologetics ministry. In his own words "how we address what other people believe or practice depends on our inner worldview." This is the log-removing Jesus admonishes us to do before speck-removing our neighbor (Mt 7:5). Other examples of relational apologetics can be seen in the woman at the well in John 4. From her dialogue with the Messiah, her belief system could be articulated as follows: 1) God

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must be worshipped from a physical and central location (4:20); 2) A false or impartial knowledge of God or notion of worship – "you worship what you do not know" (4:22); 3) Belief in a futuristic messiah according to Samaritan religion (4:25). Yet despite such a worldview analysis, Jesus begins with her need for physical water (4:7) and eventually presents her with spiritual truth. In John 20, Thomas is a model of the postmodern disciple who faces the challenge of empiricism. Upon his resurrection, Christ's disciples have a physical encounter with him (20:19–23; See Mt 28:17, Lk 24:13–49). When they tell Phillip of the news, a modern day rendering of Thomas' doubt may read: "I want to see the pigmentation of his skin to prove that the one with the nail-pierced hands has risen!" Jesus evidently meets the deeper need of this first century disciple, as well as contemporary disciples – "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (Jn 20:27). Paul's address to the Aeropagus at Mars Hill in Acts 17 is modelled in the manner of Jesus in that it is not only Christocentric but also comes from a deep conviction and concern for the Athenians: "when Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was *greatly distressed* to see the city was full of idols" (17:16). Although Paul uses a variety of apologetics methods in his address, he sees the Athenians as human persons in need of redeeming truth. Apologetics in the manner of Jesus must be "with gentleness and respect". Stackhouse (2002:227) echoes: "If we are going to defend and commend our faith, we must do it in a new mode: with a different voice and in a different posture."

5.2 *Incorporating Theological and Apologetics Education in Youth Ministry Education*

This research proves that youth ministry practitioners acknowledge the need for a relational model of apologetics which we have termed "ubuntu apologetics". Looking at the curricular in theological education, there is a lacuna of youth ministry in higher education – let alone apologetic education. Since transformational education should be informed by practical experience, youth ministry education must incorporate theological and apologetics education in African contexts. Chiroma and Muriithi (2019) have offered several elements that could be included in a youth ministry curricular – borrowing from the youth ministry education that is offered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the Pan Africa Christian University in Nairobi, Kenya. Some of these elements include critical thinking skills, theology, practical theology, ministry skills (pastoral care, preaching and counseling), social justice & transformation, youth culture, family & marriage. These elements would help

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with the "theological turn" of youth ministry that Dean & Root (2011) have proposed, not only in practical ministry but also in theological education. Since this research has also noted that classical apologetics responds largely to western contexts and questions, there is need for inclusion of specific topics for apologetics in the African context. These include African church history, African theology in postcolonial context, African culture, African Traditional Religions and Worldviews, among others. The need for an approach that considers the African contexts speaks to the resurgence of African traditional religious practices, which has tended towards syncretism rather than a wise appropriation of African culture to African Christianity. Apologetics through African eyes would ensure that the youth ministry practitioner has the necessary tools to engage with the questions that African youth are asking within a continent that is shaped by both postmodernity and African traditional worldviews.

5.3 *Conclusion*

In the sea of worldview fragmentation, resurgence of traditional religions and Islamic radicalization, youth ministry must seriously incorporate apologetics in its theory and praxis. It must do this not only to deal with the intellectual obstacles of the faith, but it must consider the real-life experiences of young people and how they correlate with faith formation within the African context. In a continent that grapples with slum proliferation in urban contexts, socio-economic inequalities in peri-urban areas, marginalization of young people and children in a hierarchical African culture, among others, youth ministry must commend the faith within the realities of such a complex socio-cultural milieu. This approach will not reduce young people to intellectual robots but will honor their personhood and seek to redeem it with the gospel. A study done by Beukes and Westhuizen (2016) among 11 congregations in the United Reforming Church of South Africa (URCSA) noted that effective youth ministry must incorporate spiritual growth, biblical knowledge, youth participation and mentorship in its ethos. Further, such youth ministry must engage apologetics in a relational approach, honoring the Africanness of the context, the place of narrative and the place of community – this is what an authentic African youth ministry might look like, what Weber (2017) calls for as "decolonising youth ministry." The point is that apologetics in youth ministry, though desperately needed, will prove effective when engaged relationally with young Africans. This is the relevance of "ubuntu apologetics" for faith formation in our beloved continent.

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Kevin Muriithi After working as an electrical engineer, he serves two congregations as a Presbyterian youth pastor in Loresho parish, Nairobi. A co-founder of Apologetics Kenya, he is involved in apologetics research and training and teaches youth ministry at Pan Africa Christian University. He is undertaking a PhD in Practical Theology at UNISA researching faith formation and youth culture. He is married to Jessica and are together raising their son Noah.

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