

About the Essays

Quite often those who object to Catholicism will do so on scriptural grounds. They claim the teachings of the Church are opposed to the teachings of the Bible. However, Scripture read in context fully supports Catholic teaching. The primary goal of my essays is to present the biblical case for Catholicism. I also refer to the writings of the Early Church Fathers. I do so in order to show that those who were taught by the Apostles believed and interpreted the Scriptures in the same way that the Catholic Church does today. I kept the essays short in the hope that skeptics would be more likely to read them. They are by no means an exhaustive study on the subjects they cover. They are designed to address the most common objections to Catholicism and thus remove any stumbling blocks to further investigation. Toward that end suggestions for further study are provided.

Perhaps you are a skeptic. Perhaps you agree with those who say that the teachings of the Catholic Church are unbiblical. But have you ever examined the evidence that supports those teachings? You are certainly entitled to believe anything that you wish. But shouldn't your opinions be based on evidence and not the prejudices of others? In the movie, "To Kill a Mocking Bird," Tom Robinson, a black man, is accused of a crime that he did not commit. The story takes place in the American south during the early 1930's. The jury was composed of local townspeople all of whom were white. Despite clear evidence that indicated his innocence the jury found Tom guilty. The verdict was not based on the facts but on the bigotry of the jury. If you were on that jury would you have stood up for the truth or would you have succumbed to peer pressure and gone along with the others? You are in such a position now. There is a great deal of prejudice against the Catholic Church. Can you examine the evidence without that prejudice affecting your opinion?

Perhaps you are a Catholic who thinks that apologetics (defending and or explaining the faith) is unnecessary. You may see it as a rude rejection of those who believe differently than we do. But that is simply not the case. Catholic Apologetics rejects false ideas but not the individuals who hold those ideas. Disagreeing with someone doesn't have to be an act of malice. In fact it can be an act of love. Let me illustrate my point with a little story. Suppose your neighbor plans on visiting friends in a distant city. He informs you that he will be leaving the following morning on the 10:00 AM bus. Being familiar with the bus schedule you realize that there is no 10:00 AM bus to your neighbor's destination. However, there is a 9:00 AM bus. Would it be rude to correct your neighbor? After all he may reject what you have to say. And of course he has the right to. Still, if you truly care about him you are duty bound to tell him what you know. The same principal applies to our faith. With eternity at stake it would be foolish to ignore our differences.

It is also important to point out that there are Catholics who don't have a good understanding of their faith. A good number of them leave the Church every year due to the efforts of anti-Catholic groups and churches. If these individuals had known why the Church teaches what she does many of them would never have left. As a Catholic apologist I wish to reach such individuals so that they can at least make an informed decision.

According to the Scriptures, apologetics is an important part of the Church's work. In Jude 3 we are commanded to "Contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints." Paul tells Titus to "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the Faith, instead of giving heed to Jewish myths or to commands of men whom reject the truth" (Titus 1:13-14). Finally Peter tells us to "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

Vatican II was in full agreement in its "Declaration on Religious Freedom." It reads in part: "The Disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ, his Master, ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it" (No. 14).

Jesus said that the truth would set us free. Common sense tells us that two opposing views cannot both be true. However, if the truth is to set us free, we must know what the truth is. Consequently a vehicle is needed to explain and verify it. Apologetics is that vehicle.

For those who wish to become apologists a word of advice: Don't expect that everyone will convert once you have demonstrated the Catholic position. People remain outside of the Church for a variety of reasons. Some simply do not wish to abandon that which has been familiar to them. The deeper someone is immersed in a way of thinking

the harder it is to see any flaws in it. For some people, sentiment and friendships can take precedence over the truth.

Some leave or stay out of the Church because they are unwilling to accept one or more of its teachings. Whether or not those teachings are true is beside the point. As Scripture puts it: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings" (2 Timothy 4:3).

This is due to our human nature. We tend to prefer things a certain way. Consequently we are inclined to see only that evidence which supports or seems to support our position. Evidence to the contrary, no matter how strong, is easily dismissed. We do this in politics, religion and even in our daily lives. None of us is immune from this type of thinking. The question is, are we willing to see it?

No matter what we prefer to believe, reality is reality. I can decide to not believe in the law of gravity. But if I jump off of a tall building I am still going to make a mess on the sidewalk. That is how reality works. And it is true whether the consequences are immediate or in the future. Facing reality may not always be pleasant or desirable. However, it is always necessary.

When sharing the faith with others it is possible for your intentions to be misinterpreted. Oftentimes people are insulted by any kind of correction. Be careful in the way you communicate and pray that God would open the hearts of the people that you want to reach. Bear in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who converts hearts.

Regardless of the outcome, never be judgmental or demeaning. While you may not have won the person over you may have planted a seed, a seed that may sprout and grow strong at some future date. Don't jeopardize that with the wrong attitude. Your objective should be to win souls not arguments. I once heard Mother Angelica say, "An argument is an exchange of feelings. A discussion is an exchange of ideas. Discussions lead to truth, arguments lead to bitterness." I couldn't agree more. That is why the Scriptures tell us to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

Feel free to print and copy any of the essays. They are all faithful to the teachings of the Magisterium. When using them with family or friends, make sure that you read them first and understand them. You may want to highlight points that you think are important or that may have come up in past conversations. Before your discussion you may want to consult books like Karl Keating's "Catholicism and Fundamentalism" or Rev. John O'Brien's "The Faith of Millions" as they cover the most common objections in more detail than I have.

Most of the essays deal with objections raised by Christians who believe that the Bible is the sole rule of faith. Traditionally these people were called Protestants. Some people don't like that label because they say that they aren't protesting anything. In the past I referred to them as Bible Christians or Bible only Christians. But that seemed to imply that Catholics weren't Bible Christians. And that is certainly not the case. So I went back to using the traditional and more accurate term. For those who say they are not protesting anything I say fair enough. But when you accept the founding principles of the Protestant Reformation, you have accepted the protest of the reformers. Thus it would be accurate to refer to you as a Protestant. Please know that I don't mean this as any sort of insult. I just need a word to use when referring to the common objections raised by those who believe as you do. And listing each of the thousands of Bible-only denominations just isn't practical.

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