

Catholic Answers to Fundamentalist Attacks

Background: Fundamentalists are not really looking for answers. They believe they already have one – the Bible.

However the Church existed for three centuries before the New Testament canon was discerned. The Bible is far more broad than some selected texts handed down from a fundamentalist anti-Catholic conditioning. We are not questioning the sincerity of their love for Jesus; it is something that other Christians do well to emulate. But it is a sadness that these people condemn so harshly what they have been wrongly taught. Their mental picture of the Catholic Church is almost beyond reality. This Tract is a plea for fundamentalists to consider with an open mind the Catholic Church's reasoning about itself in the hope that its arguments will be found both logical and scriptural. It makes sense to try to understand that a Church with over one billion adherents should be understood, what this vast number believes and why they believe as they do.

This is also an entreaty to those Catholics who have left the Church to consider what they have left behind. It is evident that some former Catholics were never really educated in the faith into which they were baptized, despite Catholic school education. What they lacked too, was a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.

There is a "new fundamentalism" which accepts the usual five fundamentals of the

Antioch wrote, before his martyrdom in 110 AD: "Where the bishop is....and where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." As anti-Catholic ministers and others try to disprove the Catholic interpretation of Mt: 16:13-19, that Peter is the foundation stone of the Church in the world by introducing the Greek words for "stone" and "pebble" to support this argument. But Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the word for "rock" is "kepha" which confirms the Catholic view. This is enforced by John 21:15-19.

Attack: Christ is Head of the Church, not Peter. Peter was never even in Rome

Christ is indeed the Head of his Church. But the Church in the world needs a "*chief pastor*" to take care of its daily affairs (a "prime minister"). It is clear in scripture that Peter was chosen as the first pastor of the Universal (Catholic) Church. In Mt 18:19 Peter is given the power of the keys, of ruling, binding and loosing and shepherding the visible Church of God of which Jesus Christ is the Head. Peter is to have successors since in this passage Jesus clearly uses the parallel of Isaiah 22:15-25 in which Eliakim was appointed "prime minister" in a position that was inter-generational: he had successors, and he too was given the power of "the keys" – supreme authority. If Jesus did not intend Peter to have successors it is strange that he used the parallel of Is 22:15-25. Even Judas had a successor – Mathias. In Jn 21:15-19, Jesus' command to Peter to "feed my lambs...feed my sheep" is a clear directive to universally pastor the Church, in

a three-fold reversal of Peter's three-fold denial of the Lord, earlier. Linus, Cletus, Clement I, Avaristus and Alexander I succeeded Peter as bishop of Rome, and so on through 2,000 years – 266 popes up to the present Pope Francis. They are all listed. Peter's presence in Rome is confirmed in his first letter where the code word "Babylon" is used for Rome, as also in the Book of Revelation. The original Babylon at the time was a deserted relic of mud huts. Jn 21:25 states that there are many things connected with Jesus and the apostles not written down. The remains of the apostle Peter were positively identified in 1968 in an announcement made by Pope Paul VI; the original tomb and remains were discovered directly under the main altar of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. One can read the full account in Nino LoBello's *Guide to the Vatican* and in John E. Walsh's book *The Bones of St Peter*. In addition, the historical record of Peter being in Rome is unrivalled.

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Printed with ecclesiastical approval.

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Pamphlet 015

virgin birth, the physical resurrection of Jesus, the inerrancy of scripture, Christ's sacrificial atonement and the second coming of Christ; plus a sixth fundamental – anti-Catholicism.

Direction in fundamentalist communities is given by a self-appointed leader who may or may not have formal scriptural and theological training. There is a simplistic approach to the world, which is seen as evil and the kingdom of God as the only good. This resurrection of the heresy of Manichaeism, born of Gnosticism in the 3rd century and condemned by the Church centuries ago, is rampant again in our day. Here we will respond to some of the most common objections raised against the Catholic Church:

Attack: Catholics are not people of the Book and are totally ignorant of the Word of God

Vatican II (1962-65) accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:31, 2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:19-21 and 3:15-16). They have the author as God himself and have been handed down as such to the Catholic Church. It was the Catholic Church who preserved the Bible, as we know it from ancient times until the 16th century when Protestants began to change it. Most Catholic parishes today offer classes in Bible study. The central act of Catholic worship, the Mass, has in its Sunday scripture readings, one from each of the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Gospels

and the Psalms. 26% of the service is devoted to the Bible, more than in any fundamentalist service. The Catholic Church's leading biblical scholars become members of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, which promotes biblical studies and preserves translations from error, and they work with reputable scholars from Judaism and the main-line Protestant churches.

Just as in any constitution there needs to be an interpreter by a competent legal authority, so Christ did not leave us to our own imperfect devices to rationalize what he meant in the Bible. Ours is a Church of the Spirit who guides us into all truth (Acts 1:8). This is done by means of the Church's "Magisterium" (teaching authority), which is at the service of the Word of God.

Attack: The Catholic Church allows an adulterant to intrude, which forms the basis of all Catholic error – "tradition"

Sacred Tradition is one of the most misunderstood doctrines, and a focus for attack against the Catholic faith. Nothing in Sacred Tradition can contradict the Bible, which is Tradition in written form. Jesus warned us of false traditions (Mt 15:6), and St Paul of those not of Christ (Col 2:8). But there is true (Sacred) Tradition (2 Thes 3:6), which Paul himself was passing on to his converts. In 2 Thes 2:15 Paul writes: "So then brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, either by word of mouth or by letter." Not everything the apostles taught was put into writing (Jn 21:25). The truths

existed and were passed on for three centuries by preaching before the Church canonically discerned the New Testament. In addition to the written Word of God there is the oral Word. Both are equally the Word of God and passed on by the Catholic Church's living process of Sacred Tradition.

Attack: There was no Roman Catholic Church for the first 300 years – the church of Catholics is the Whore of Babylon

Jesus chose one of the twelve to be the leader of his visible Church (Mt 16:18), a Church with unity (Jn 10:16), the Pillar and Foundation of truth (1 Tim 3:15), with Jesus present in it till the end of time (Mt 28:20). The Holy Spirit would keep the Church faithful to the teachings (Jn 14:26). This Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Every breakaway from this Church is contrary to the will of God (Jn 17:21) and becomes a scandal to the non-Christian world.

Attack: Your church came into being in 325 AD. St Clement and others were not Catholic in faith. You wrongly assert that the Emperor at the time, Constantine (in 325 AD), "founded" the Catholic Church. But Constantine did not qualify to be pope as he only received baptism on his deathbed!

The pope at the time was Sylvester I and there were 32 popes before him, starting with Peter who was pope until 67 AD when Nero martyred him. Bishop Ignatius of