

Apologetics V

What's So Special about Rome?

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Schedule

- April 16: Scientific evidence for God
- April 23: Philosophical proofs of God; absolute truth & possibility of knowledge
- April 30: Historical evidences for the truth of the Gospel; other religions
- May 7: Why unnecessary suffering and evil?
- **May 15 (Tues): What's so special about Rome?**
- May 21: The theology of the person, ethics (with Jennifer Fulwiler)

Overview

- 0. My Story
- 1. How do We Know?
- 2. The Unity of the Church
- 3. Sola Scriptura
- 4. Justification by Faith Alone
- 5. Objections to Catholicism

0. My Story

- A 30 year journey, starting in college.
- Some influences:
 - Church Fathers
 - John Henry Newman
 - G. K. Chesterton
 - C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien
 - St. Thomas Aquinas
 - Alistair McGrath, *Justitia Dei*
 - Richard John Neuhaus & *First Things*, Joint Declaration on Justification
 - More Church Fathers (especially Augustine),
 - The Council of Trent, Christopher O' Malley (UD).

Many Roads

- Many different road to Rome: spirituality, mystical experience, Mary, social justice, moral teachings, history & venerability, art, music, community, etc.
- All equally valid.
- For me: almost purely intellectual, theological
- Why I became a Catholic:
because Catholicism is true!

A Gradual “Catholicizing” of the Mind

- Rejecting Sola Scriptura
- Mary and the saints (Revelation 8)
- Purgatory (C. S. Lewis)
- The apostolic succession and the three-part ministry
- The primacy of the Pope and the unity of the Church
- Growing appreciation for the Mass

1. How do We Know?

- How do Catholics Know that the Catholic Church is the True Church?
- Because the Church teaches that it is so, and it teaches with the authority of God.
- The Holy Spirit confirms to our spirits that the Church speaks to us in God's name. This is a legitimate source of knowledge: no further knowledge of the authority of the Church is required.

Can Protestants Claim This, Too?

- In contrast, it is impossible for a Protestant to claim that he knows that his church is the true church simply because his church has taught him so.
- The Protestant denies that any church, any human institution, speaks with such authority. Only the Bible has such authority.
- A preacher speaks with divine authority only insofar as he can demonstrate the truth of what he says from the Biblical text.

Every Man a Super-Theologian

- Hence, in principle, every Protestant believer must be a super-theologian, capable of demonstrating the truth of his church's doctrinal commitments (both what is true/false, and what is essential/optional) from the Scriptures alone.
- This is humanly impossible: the Bible is complex, allusive, figurative, consisting primarily of narratives, and virtually devoid of systematic theology.

For the Catholic Faith

- The apostolic origins of the Church
- The role of the Church in recognizing and preserving the Bible
- The theological consistency of the Church over the millennia
- The unity of the Church, while embracing cultural and ethnic diversity
- The miracles and sanctity of the saints

2. Positive Case for the Church (Unity)

1. God wills the perpetual unity and orthodoxy of the Church, rooted in the ministry of the apostles.
(John 14:26, 16:13, 17:19-23; Matthew 28:20)
2. If God wills an end for humanity, he must will an adequate means for that end that is appropriate to human nature.
3. Given the social nature of human beings, the only means that are adequate for the unity and orthodoxy of the Church and appropriate to human nature is the creation of a self-sustaining society, with its own internal government.

Positive Case, Cont.

4. Therefore, God must have willed that the Church be a self-sustaining society with its own internal government, rooted in the ministry of the apostles.
5. As a matter of historical fact, the Church's internal government consists of a self-perpetuating college of bishops, originating as the successors of the apostles, with the Pope (the successor of Peter) as its head.
6. Therefore, God willed that the Church should consist of a society governed by the college of bishops, with the Pope as its head.

What are the Alternatives?

- God could supernaturally lead each individual believer to perfect theological knowledge. This would destroy the social nature of the Church. (But -- John 16 - the Holy Spirit will lead **you'all**, plural)
- God could allow the Church to fragment into thousands of confessions, each treating the others as false teachers. (But -- John 17:21-23)
- God could allow the Church to maintain unity by doctrinal indifference. (But -- 2 John 1:10, Romans 16:17, 2 Thesallonians 3:14)

Identifying Christ's Church

- Which Church did Christ and the apostles found? This is a simple historical, sociological question.
- The answer is clear: the apostles exercised authority, and they appointed bishops (overseers) in each city to perpetuate that authority:
 - Luke 6:13, Acts 11, Acts 13:2-3, Acts 14:23, Acts 20:2, Acts 24:23, Titus 1:5, 1 Timothy 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:2

The Successor of Peter

- Jesus assigned special authority to Peter: the Rock, the Keys of the Kingdom (see Is. 22:22), the power to bind and loose (Matt 16:18-19), “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17), “Strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31-32).
- Peter in Rome (1 Peter 5:13). Universal tradition of Church. (Adolph Harnack)

Confirmed by Church Fathers, Bishops, Enemies

- Pope Clement (92-101). Exercises authority over Corinth (while apostle John was still alive).
- Ignatius of Antioch, instructed by John, third bishop of Antioch. Pope 'presides'.
- Polycarp of Smyrna (student of John) comes to Rome, seeking Pope Anicetus's ruling on date of Easter.
- Every Pope but 1 in first 200 years martyred.

Unbroken Chain

- Unbroken chain of bishops of Rome from Peter to Benedict XVI. Not a single heretic.
- There is no other apostolic see with such continuity: Jerusalem (destroyed in 130 AD), Antioch (monophysite heresy), Alexandria (Arian and Monophysite, extinct).

3. Sola Scriptura

- Confess a doctrine only if it can be proved from Scriptural texts alone.
- Guilty of circular reasoning?
 1. Sola Scriptura is true, because popes and councils have erred.
 2. We know that popes and councils have erred, because they have taught doctrines that cannot be supported by Scripture alone (Mary, saints, purgatory, etc.)
 3. We know that these extra-biblical doctrines are false, because Sola Scriptura is true.

Difficult to Prove a Contradiction between Scripture and Tradition

- First, one must prove that one's interpretation of the relevant Bible passages is correct.
- Second, one must interpret the Church's teaching correctly, in light of the fact that the Church accepts the Scriptures as an infallible norm. One must interpret the Church's teaching charitably, recognizing the possibility of future clarification. Example: one sacrifice (Hebrews 7:27)

First Self-Contradiction

1. The Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura.
2. If (1), then the Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura only if that doctrine is taught in the Scriptures.
3. The Scriptures do not teach Sola Scriptura.

Second Self-Contradiction

1. The Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura.
2. If (1), then the Church should teach which books are part of the canon of Scripture.
3. If (1), then the Church should teach which books are part of the canon of Scripture only if the Scriptures themselves teach which books are part of the canon of Scripture.
4. The Scriptures do not teach which books are part of the canon of Scripture

Third Self-Contradiction

1. The Church should teach the doctrine of Sola Scriptura.
2. If (1), then the canon of Scripture was decided by a competent theological authority.
3. The canon of Scripture was decided by the Catholic Church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries.
4. A competent theological authority would accurately teach the central doctrine of the Gospel, namely, justification.
5. The Catholic Church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries did not teach accurately the central doctrine of the Gospel, namely, justification.

4. Justification by Faith Alone

- The Lutheran/Protestant arguments for faith alone are rooted in three considerations:
 1. Scriptural texts that mention justification by faith, without mentioning any other factor (besides aspects of faith, like repentance, or objects of faith, like baptism): Rom. 3:28, 5:1; Gal. 2:16, 3:24, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 16:31, 2 Tim. 3:15, 1 Peter 1:9.

Protestant Case for Faith Alone

2. A concern that Roman Catholic theology during the Middle Ages was slipping into a humanistic “Pelagianism” or “Semi-Pelagianism”: the idea that human beings contribute to our own salvation by the exercise of our natural powers, apart from the grace available through Christ.
3. A sense that Catholicism introduces a number of elements that reduce and crowd out the sufficiency of Christ’s merits: merit, satisfaction, Mary and the saints, indulgences, purgatory, the sacrifice of the Mass. By Christ alone!

Protestant Case, part 4

4. A concern that Roman Catholic theology deprives the believer of any *assurance* of salvation, leaving them in a perpetual state of terror and anxiety (“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” Rom 8:15),
 - ❖ forcing Catholics to rely on self-centered virtues as their only basis for any confidence, like the Pharisee: “God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.” (Luke 18:11)

The Catholic Answers, 1

- In none of the cited passages do Paul or the other authors say that we are justified by faith “alone”. This is an inference, and not a very secure one.
- In addition, there are many Biblical passages that indicate that we are justified by things other than faith: works (James 2:24), faith working in love (Galatians 5:6), perseverance (Matt. 10:22, Romans 2:7). The Scriptures make clear that grace is lost through mortal sin: 1 Cor 6:9-10. Gal 5:21, Eph. 5:5. Thus, the avoidance or remission of mortal sin is also required.

Catholic Answers, 2

- The Council of Trent (which began meeting shortly after Luther's death) corrected any tendency toward semi-Pelagianism, building on the recently rediscovered texts of the Council of Orange.
- Unfortunately, by this stage, the split between Catholics and Lutherans had hardened, and the Lutherans refused to participate in Trent and afterward rejected its conclusions.

Trent on Grace

“Justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that is to say, from His vocation, whereby, *without any merits existing on their parts*, they are called. [Man is] not able, by his own free will, without the grace of God, to move himself unto justice in His sight.”

Sixth Session, Chapter IV

Trent on Grace, cont.

- “...conceiving faith by hearing, they (believers) are freely moved towards God, believing those things to be true which God has revealed and promised, and this especially, that *God justifies the impious by His grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and when, understanding themselves to be sinners, they, by turning themselves, from the fear of divine justice whereby they are profitably agitated, to consider the mercy of God, are raised unto hope, confiding that *God will be propitious to them for Christ's sake.*” Chapter VI.

Trent on Grace, cont.

“We are therefore said to be justified by faith, because *faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation, and the root of all Justification*; without which it is impossible to please God, and to come unto the fellowship of His sons: but we are therefore said to be justified *freely*, because that none of those things which precede justification -- whether faith or works -- merit the grace itself of justification. For, *if it be a grace, it is not now by works*, otherwise, as the same Apostle says, grace is no more grace.”

(Chapter VIII)

Catholic Answers, 3

- In addition, Luther and the other Reformers were guilty of a naive metaphysical assumption: that our work and Christ's work are mutually exclusive.
- But, Paul teaches us “to work out salvation with fear and trembling.” and assures us that “it is God who is at work within you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)
- Similarly, the role of Mary and the saints does not detract from Christ's: it is Christ who is at work within all of us, the basis of all merit.

Catholic Answers, 4

- The Catholic Church makes forgiveness readily available to all believers: assuring them of daily remission of venial sins, and offering the sacrament of reconciliation for mortal sins.
- The satisfaction that follows reconciliation is not the means by which we *earn* our forgiveness. Instead, the satisfaction is a prescription designed to help heal us of the damage to our souls and relationships caused by the sin.
- Absolution precedes satisfaction, it does not follow it.

Three Protestant Theories

- ✘ Lutherans & Arminians: you can lose your faith & salvation through mortal sin without repentance.
- ✘ Calvinists: if you are truly saved, you cannot lose your faith or remain unrepentantly in mortal sin. These first two offer no more assurance now of final salvation than does the Church.
- ✘ “Eternal security” American Evangelicals (Campus Crusade, Charles Stanley: if you believe once, you are eternally saved, no matter if you spend the rest of your life in unrepentant mortal sin). This view is an aberration historically, and wildly unbiblical.

Catholics have Greater Assurance

- The Catholic Church offers greater assurance of salvation than does Protestantism, because of the doctrine of the sacraments as “ex opere operata.”
- The Protestant must have faith in his own faith, not just in the promises of God. The Catholic can turn his faith outward, to the proper object (God’s grace and mercy).

Imputed or “Alien” Righteousness

- In response to these three concerns, Luther invented a novel doctrine: by faith we receive an “alien” righteousness “outside us”: the righteousness of Christ “imputed to” us.
- Later Protestant theologians introduce the justification/sanctification distinction.

A Protestant Distinction

- Justification is imputed, alien righteousness, outside of us. Sufficient for meriting eternal life.
- Sanctification is inherent righteousness, resulting in good works.
- Justification always produces sanctification, but sanctification is a mere by-product: it plays no role in securing or sustaining grace.

Two Problems

- These doctrines were novelties: completely unknown to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, including St. Augustine.
- The Bible contains no hint of either doctrine. The terms ‘justify’ and ‘sanctify’ are used interchangeably (2 Thes. 2:13, 1 Cor. 6:11, Heb. 13:12, 1 Peter 1:2, Acts 26:18)

Does the Church teach that We “Earn” our Salvation by Works?

- No -- we “merit” salvation by works. Merit means meeting a precondition, not “earning”.
- We merit God’s grace through God’s grace. The works that “merit” eternal life do so by being fruit of the Spirit, and by uniting us (mystically) with Christ and His merits. (Christopher Malloy, *Engrafted into Christ*, 2005; CCC par 2011)

5. Objections

- Interpret the Bible literally!
- Don't pray to the saints, or for the dead.
- Don't deify Mary and the saints.
- No Biblical basis for Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, purgatory, the intercession of the saints.
- The Mass isn't a sacrifice. Jesus was sacrificed only once (Heb. 7:27).

More Objections

- Who made the Pope supreme?
- Isn't the Eucharist cannabilistic? And how can Jesus' human body be so many places at once? Transubstantiation isn't in the Bible.
- How can Catholics claim to have the "one true church"? Isn't that arrogant or disrespectful of other traditions?

Still More Objections

- Isn't the Trinity inconsistent? How can God be One and Three?
- Isn't it barbaric that God the Father would “sacrifice” His Son, simply to “buy” our salvation, or “prove” His love for us?