

A Gentle, Loving, Inclusive Apologia to an ex-Catholic Friend

I woke up thinking about one of our conversations last night. Which I had a blast doing by the way. I wanted to say that even though my research has lead me to the Catholic Church, I by no means think that there aren't people living the Christian life better than a lot of Catholics. Maybe even most Catholics.

You guys are an example of that, as I'm sure a good portion of your church is. My whole thing is purely factual. I, if you didn't notice, have a serious case of OCD. I have to know all that can be known about something before I can believe it (Thomas). I had to research to see if Jesus started a Church, if so, what did it look like, and is it still around today.

Well, the Bible tells us He did start a Church and the head of that Church on Earth would be Peter (the Pope). Mt 16:19-22. He then gave the Apostles (the first Bishops with Peter as the head, who appointed other Bishops to replace themselves (apostolic succession) all the power on Earth that he has in heaven to run the Church Jn. 20: 19-23. He even gave them the power to forgive sin (Confession). That's A LOT of power.

Then after *Acts* the Bible stops telling us the rest of the Early Church's story so we have to move history. And thank God we have many writings by non-heretical early Christian authors. They're called the Apostolic Fathers if they were before about 140 AD-ish, and there called the Early Church Fathers beyond that. These guys are a valuable asset in comprehending the message of the Apostles, and how Scripture should be interpreted.

In the year 107 AD, a guy named St Ignatius of Antioch, who is a disciple of John the Apostle says, "See that you all follow the

bishop, even as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the presbytery (priest) as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper **Eucharist**, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it (through ordinations). Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the **Catholic Church**. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a **love-feast (Eucharist)**; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid."

WOW! That's pretty clear what the Church looked like, and what it was called. So this shows us that the Church, in at least the year 107 AD, is called the Catholic Church. It was probably called the Catholic Church from the beginning but this is the earliest writing existing of the words. It also tells us how it functioned and how it was structured and transmitted, and where authority rested.

We also see in writings what the Sunday worship service looked like as well in the writings of St Justin Martyr in 150 AD.

www.catholicconvert.com/Portals/0/PrimerMass.pdf It looks exactly like the Mass today. They read the Bible, explained the reading, took a collection to give to the widows and orphans (Catholic Charities), then the highlight of the gathering was the eating of the Eucharist or the Love Feast as it was also called.

So from the time of Jesus' death in 33 AD there is no codified, final Bible until 394 AD. There is only a Church to explain the Gospel and tell us which of the soon to be New Testament writings are genuine and true. We know the name of this Church is Catholic. We know that it has Bishops appointed to take the place of the Apostles and run the Church and to preserve

and hold on to **ALL** the Apostles taught them in writing or word of mouth 2 Thess 2:15. So not everything the Apostles taught went into the Bible. Some of it was taught orally. Paul makes several references to saying of Jesus that were not in the Gospels, so by this account we know that not all things were written, but spoken in oral tradition.

There remains only one Church for 1524 years. Then a guy named Martin Luther decided he didn't agree with what the Church taught so he broke away from the Catholic Church and he started what is now known as Protestantism. He said we don't need the Bishops and the Pope to help us interpret the Bible. He had very good reasons for wanting to reform the Church but had no authority to break from her.

There were some corruptions in the Church at the time that needed addressing such as the selling of indulgences, but it should have been corrected from within. It would be like a State succeeding from the Union because there was a corrupt official in the Senate. One of the first things he did when he broke away from the Catholic church was take 11 books out of the Bible. These books taught counter to his new teaching or his new tradition if you will. He later put 4 books back in, James, Hebrews, Jude, Revelation. So that is why the King James Version has 7 less books than the Catholic Bible.

Well before his death the new church he started broke into 200 competing church's who couldn't agree on what the Bible said. Today, if you look it up in the Oxford book of Denominations, there are over 35,000 competing denominations who can't agree on what the Bible says. They claim that they believe in the "primary doctrines," which the Bible never tells us what the "primary doctrines" are, so its difficult to say what they agree

on. And if you go to a non-denominational church that is actually its own denomination because it doesn't agree with the any of the other denominations. So its a non-denominational denomination.

So now there are probably over 50,000 versions of what the Bible says in the varying denominations. Realistically, everyone outside the Catholic Church has their own interpretation of what the Bible says which puts it in the millions. Everyone who can read now has his own Church in a way because there is no authority to tell him that his interpretation is right or wrong. This is in complete violation of Scripture when in 2 Peter 1:20 says "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

Remember there was virtually only one church for 1524 years. This is a real problem considering Jesus says this in John 17:21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Ephesians 4:5 "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"

Jesus tells us that the world will know that You sent me by our oneness. Jesus insists that the Church be one. If there are 50,000 denominations how will the world know God sent Christ? How can a person choose which church is the one started by Christ and teaches the correct doctrine if there are over 50,000 choices.

Look in your phone book tonight. I looked in the Raliegh area and found there are over 2,000 denominations in just OUR phone book.

So, when you mentioned yesterday that "that's the Catholic side of the story" with regards of how we got the Bible, that's the only side of the story there is. It was the Catholic Bishops who hashed out the canon to determine which books could be read at the Mass. After they decided they sent it to *Pope Damasus I* to be ratified.

IF you look into history you will see that the Catholic Church is the only Church there was when the Bible was Canonized. That's why there is only one side to the story. If the Bible teaches anything that goes against the Catholic Church it would of been a really, really bad strategy to included that book in the Official Canon of the New Testament.

As St John Henry Newman said after converting to the Catholic Church "to be deep in history is to cease being protestant." If there is no infallible Church there is no infallible book. Like I mentioned earlier, the first thing Martin Luther did when he split from the Church is take out 11 books of the Bible, because there is no longer an infallible authority to tell him which books belong in the Bible.

So anyone in one of the 50,000 denominations could add or subtract books from the Bible if they wanted because there is no one to tell him he can't. If they thought they didn't like the book of James because it taught the we are saved by faith and works, they could put Billy Graham or Charles Stanley in there who teaches that we are NOT saved by faith and works but by Faith Alone. James 2:24 - "See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."

So if you're open to investigating, find out who started your Church. I think Crosspoint is only a few years old if I'm not

mistaken. And keep in mind that Jesus did start a Church. A visible Church. A Church that HE PROMISED that the gates of Hell would never prevail against it. Matthew 16:18 "And I say also unto thee, That you are Peter (Greek word for Rock), and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

If we said that the way Jesus would of said it in Aramaic it of looked like this -"And I say also unto thee, That thou art **ROCK (Kepha)**, and upon this **ROCK (Kepha)** I will build **MY** church; and the gates of hell **will never** prevail against it."

It sounds like Martin Luther and the rest of the men who split from the Catholic Church thought Jesus went against his promise. That the "gates of hell" had prevailed against it.

I love you and if you want I'll give you some of the books I've read to reach the choices I've reached I will. If you're not interested that's fine to. But as the late great Archbishop Fulton Sheen said, "there aren't one hundred who hate the Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they THINK the Catholic Church is."

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance--that principle is contempt prior to investigation". - Herbert Spencer.

God bless you in your search!