

If I were a Catholic Apologist

If I were a Catholic apologist, I would concentrate my attacks on evangelicals on two doctrines, namely sola scriptura and sola fide. Given the gross spiritual ignorance and rampant error among evangelicals, I should be able to destroy the very foundations of their religion in no time.

Take the popular concept of sola scriptura among many evangelicals. They think that the Bible teaches that the Bible alone is the only authority, and thus they reject the claims of an infallible magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed of every other authority, including the authority of their own local churches and their pastors.

There is no need for many arguments. One is enough. I would ask a very simple question: “Since you believe that the Bible is the only authority, show me from the Bible alone which books should be included in the Bible and which should be excluded?”

Their answer will be dead silence. You cannot show from the Bible alone which books are inspired and which books are not canonical. That concept of sola scriptura cannot be defended from the Bible.

It’s an easy win. But my conscience would not let me sleep. I cannot be at peace with myself knowing that I have been deceptive.

For contrary to what many people think, sola scriptura does not assert that the Bible alone is the only authority. Sola scriptura asserts that the Bible, being the Word of God, is the only INFALLIBLE authority. Sola scriptura most definitely allows and upholds the authority of the church and tradition, which the Bible itself affirms.

We know which books belong to the canon and which are apocryphal through the work of our forefathers in the faith, namely the church. That is the way that things happened historically. God gave his inspired Word through chosen men like Matthew, Peter and Paul, which were handed on to the first Christian believers, who then copied and passed them on to other churches and to successive generations. The church received the holy books and preserved them to this very day as her most precious heritage. Thanks to the church we can hold the Book in our hands and say, ‘This is the Word of God!’

Now I can almost hear someone object, ‘But how can you know for certain which books are canonical since you do not believe that the church is infallible?’

The answer is simple. The church does not have to be *infallible* to be *correct*. I am certainly not immune from error, but if I say that 4 plus 6 equals 10, I am nonetheless correct in my answer. We should ask, therefore, can God use a very fallible church – for evidently the church has made many mistakes during its history – to establish correctly the canonical books?

The staunchest Catholic apologist must admit this is possible. Moreover, we know that God has already done so before the church era. To our spiritual brethren, the saints of the Old Testament, God also gave the Holy Scriptures. The Jews knew which books were canonical Scriptures not on the basis of an infallible degree of their king, high priest or an ecumenical council of their leaders. They cherished the sacred books which they had received from their forefather without attributing infallibility to their leaders.

We can do the same today. We can confidently accept and treasure the canonical scriptures, as indeed our spiritual forefathers had done for the first fifteen hundred years since the birth of the NT church (prior to the Council of Trent). We should be grateful to God for his people and his appointed leaders – fallible as they were - as he used them throughout the centuries to identify, preserve and transmit the Scriptures to us today.

If you are a Catholic I hope that tonight you will sleep peacefully after you realize that one of the main arguments against the unique, ultimate and absolute authority of the Bible is spurious.