

Questions About Catholicism

Biblical Authority

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

2 Timothy 3:16

Apocrypha

- The apocryphal books were written between 250 B.C. and the time of Christ.
- They include such books as: Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Esdras, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Bel and the Dragon. Were not written in Hebrew but in Greek, during the “period of silence” from the time of Malachi.
- Roman Catholicism recognizes these fifteen books as authoritative in addition to the sixty-six books of Scripture.
- The Council of Trent in 1546 officially decreed the authority of tradition as well as Scripture.

Apocrypha

- Jewish Canon
- The Jewish OT canon consisted of twenty-four books that match the thirty-nine books of the Jewish and Protestant Bibles of today.
- The Jewish historian Josephus lists twenty-two books (Ruth appended to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah).

Apocrypha

- Testimony of Jesus
- Jesus never quotes from the Apocrypha.
- But Jesus does quote from nearly every one of the twenty-four Old Testament books.
- Jesus places the limits of inspired history from the martyrs Abel to Zechariah (Matthew 23:35).

Apocrypha

- Testimony of New Testament Writers
- No New Testament writer ever quotes from the Apocrypha.
- The writers do allude to and even cite pagan poets whose books were not considered inspired Scripture (see Acts 17:28).
- Why then did the leaders of the Catholic Church at a later date (1546) add the apocrypha to their Catholic Bible?

Purgatory

- Purgatory - is a condition or process or place of purification. It is a place of temporary punishment in which souls who die in a state of grace are made ready for heaven.
- Key verses: 2 Timothy 1:18, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, Matthew 12:32, Luke 23:43, and Hebrews 12:29.
 - Luke 23:43 - "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."
 - Hebrews 12:29 - "for our God is a consuming fire"

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Praying for the Deceased

“And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them.

It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.”

2 Maccabees 12:45-46

Priesthood and Confession

- Priesthood - is the office commissioned and ordained with the Holy Orders of the Catholic Church.
- The Protestant Reformation promoted the concept of “the priesthood of all believers” which is distinct from the institution of the ministerial priesthood (or the Holy Orders) found in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox.
- 1 Peter 2:9 - “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.”
- Matthew 27:51 - “the curtain of the temple was torn in two.”

Priesthood and Confession

- Priests are no longer needed to offer sacrifices.
 - Hebrews 10:18 - “Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”
- There is no need for confession to a priest.
 - 1 Timothy 2:5 - “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
 - Ephesians 1:7 - “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”

Doctrines About Mary

Perpetual Virginity of Mary

- The perpetual virginity of Mary is the belief that she was a virgin “before, during, and after” the birth of Jesus.
- Catholics adhere to this doctrine, as does the Orthodox churches who recognize Mary as *Aeiparthenos* (meaning “ever virgin”).
- The tradition first appears in the “Protoevangelium of James” which is an apocryphal text. It teaches that the brothers of Jesus are sons of Joseph from the previous marriage.
- Many of early church fathers also believed in the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Perpetual Virginity of Mary

- Matthew 13:55-56 - “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”
- Mark 6:3 - “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?”
And they took offense at him.”
- It is true that the word for brother (*adelphos*) could mean someone of an extended family (e.g., cousin) but usually means blood brother.

Perpetual Virginity of Mary

- Matthew 23:8 - “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.”
- Catholic apologists argue that Jesus told us to call one another brothers, and that does not mean we have the same mother. But that isn’t exactly the plain reading of the previous statements in Matthew and Mark.
- Matthew 1:25 - Joseph did not know Mary “until she had given birth.”
- Catholic apologists argue that the Greek words (*heos hou*) don’t necessarily imply a change but can mean “while.”

Assumption of Mary

- This is the teaching, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on November 1950 that Mary was taken to Heaven, body and soul, where she was glorified and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things.
- The original declaration did not make it clear whether this happened before or after death.
- Recent pronouncements say she died, and her body was “assumed” into heaven to be reunited with her soul (instead of going through the natural process of physical decay upon death).

Immaculate Conception of Mary

- This means more than just the immaculate conception of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- It is the proclamation by Pope Pius on December 8, 1854 that the Most Holy Virgin Mary was “without any stain.” In other words, Mary was free from original sin and completely devoid of sin.
- It is also the believe that in each of her apparitions (Marian apparitions) the Immaculate Conception thus shines forth goodness, light, and grace.

Papal Infallibility

- Papal infallibility - is the doctrine that the pope, acting as supreme teacher and under certain conditions, cannot err when he teaches in matters of faith or morals.
- When the Pope (1) intends to teach, (2) by virtue of his supreme authority, (3) on a matter of faith and morals, (4) to the whole Church, he is preserved by the Holy Spirit from error.
- His teaching act is therefore called “infallible” and the teaching which he articulates is termed “irreformable.”

Infant Baptism

- Infant baptism - is a sacrament in which parents bring their babies to the waters of baptism by professing a belief in Christ on behalf of the child.
- It is done because of the belief that baptism confers saving grace. If an adult wants to be baptized, the Catholic Church also requires them to profess their faith in Christ.
- Baptism is compared to circumcision. In the Old Testament, babies were circumcised when they were eight days old. The Apostle Paul calls baptism the “new circumcision” in Colossians 2:11-12.

Biblical Salvation

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Ephesians 2:8-9

Common Ground with Catholics

The Bible

- Authority of the Bible - Both Protestants and Catholics respect the Bible.
- They differ in how many books are in the Bible.
- While Catholics believe the Bible is infallible, they also believe we need an infallible interpreter of the Bible.
- They believe God has given us an infallible Bible with an infallible interpreter, the successor to Peter, the bishop of Rome, the Pope.

The Trinity and Jesus

- Trinity - Catholics believe in the Trinity: one God who is manifested in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – all are God.
- The divine essence is common to the three Persons, and they are not separable.
- The deity of Jesus - Jesus was conceived miraculously in Mary's womb, born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth, was crucified and resurrected bodily.
- He has all the attributes of God – therefore, He is God.

Morality

- Moral absolutes - Catholic and evangelicals believe in an ethical system based upon moral and biblical absolutes.
- These are rooted in the nature of God and revealed through God's revelation through nature (general revelation) and Scripture (special revelation).
- Catholics and evangelicals are opposed to moral relativism.
- This universal moral law serves as a common basis for all human actions and for universal human rights.

Atonement

- Atonement - Catholics believe in the necessity of the atonement of the death of Jesus on the cross as an atoning sacrificial payment for our sins.
- The death of Jesus is an important part of the mass.
- The sacraments are also a visible sign.
- The sacraments are the means whereby God imparts grace to a person who is worthy to receive it.

Catholics and Evangelicals

- Obviously, Catholics and Protestants disagreed with each other during the Protestant Reformation. But we often hear that the differences aren't as significant as they were in the past.
- Actually, they are more pronounced.
- Thomas Aquinas, for example, rejected the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary believing it is inconsistent with original sin.
- Aquinas, Anselm, Augustine didn't believe in the infallibility of the Pope because the doctrine was not proclaimed until the First Vatican Council.

