

Catholic Family Apologetics Catechism

These 25 Questions and Answers with their notes are the 'skeleton' of a new book the size of the *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition II*. It will have 50 Q&As and handy hints on how to be an apologist.

See Handouts n. 76 on the preliminary ideas for this catechism

APOLOGETICS and APOLOGISTS

1. *What does apologetics do?* [9]

Apologetics uses human reasoning in support of the Faith*

It's not an apology saying 'sorry', but a persuasive explanation.

2. *What are apologists?* [10+9]

Apologists are evangelists of truth, friendly, zealous, radiating goodwill, and rich in Godliness, Scripture, doctrine, history, philosophy and literature.

Their lives speak louder than their words...

3. *What do apologists do?* [9]

Apologists choose means apt for persuading a particular person.

With atheists, we appeal to **human experience**; for luke-warm believers, to **more noble standards**; for devout believers, equipping them with proofs. "Arguing to the man", *argumentum ad hominem*, uses his own principles to show him a contradiction in his case; e.g. Matthew 22:17-22; Acts 17:19-34.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

4. *Can we really be sure God exists?* [21]

We can really be sure God exists from the order and design in the world, "from the things that He made."

Romans 1:20; cf. Wisdom 13; Hebrews 11:6. **Order** in the world implies its **design**; design implies an **intelligence** at work. Like detectives asking, "What/who did it?", we look for clues and for explanations to make sense of them. By reason, man realizes there must be a Creator God not made by another, since an endless chain of explanations would explain nothing. Only by revelation, however, can man know God as the Holy One, awesome and wondrous. See *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition II* (CFCDE) pp. 16-7,113.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

5. *How do we know we have souls?* [23]

We know we have souls because our knowledge and free will are non-material things and need 'a container' not made of matter.

Only a spiritual 'container' can hold non-material things, such as thoughts and noble ideals like Truth, Beauty, Goodness, God, love, mercy and justice. Non-material things like knowledge are **not divided or diminished by being shared** but actually multiplied! Religious teaching and preaching should often mention the idea of immaterial reality and of 'spirit'. See CFCDE pp. 22-25.

THE BIBLE as human literature and history

6. *What is the Bible?* [28]

The Bible is 73 individual ancient books which testify to God the Creator, man's dignity, duty, destiny and sin, Christ the Son of God and His founding a Church.

Merely judged on their merits as ancient human literature/history, these books, '**the scriptures**', may persuade unbelievers to believe, i.e. they are **motives of credibility** for the faith. Our Separated Brethren seem to use a circular argument that "begs the question to be proved" when they assert that the Bible justifies itself. They reject our two-stage apologetic with its necessity of the Church.

GOD REVEALS Himself and His Plan

7. *How does God guarantee His revelation?* [8]

God guarantees His revelation by miracles and prophecies.

Revelation is God speaking to man. Miracles are His signature: CFCDE p. 35. Some miracles symbolize the message, e.g. healing the paralytic teaches the healing of his soul, cf. Matthew 9:2-8.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST? whose son is He?

8. *What do the New Testament (NT) books prove about Christ?*

As documents of ancient history, the New Testament books prove that Christ claimed to be God and showed it, especially by His Resurrection. [23] New Testament documents: four Gospels, Acts, Epistles of Apostles.

NEVER MAN SPOKE LIKE THIS MAN!

9. *Did Christ found a Church?* [19]

Christ founded a Church visible, immortal and infallible, one, holy, universal and apostolic, and it is today's Catholic Church.

Those whom God prompts to believe the Church gladly accept her teaching on the Bible's content, inerrancy and meaning.

THE BIBLE as teachings of the Church

10. *What is a Catholic Bible?* [22]

A Catholic Bible is the 73 books in one volume which the Church declares are God-inspired, and written without error,

God used the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles as His human instruments to write the books of our Bible.

THE WORD OF GOD

11. *Who and what is the Word of God?* [7+18]

Jesus Christ is the Word of God.

The Holy Bible is the written word of God and Apostolic Tradition is the unwritten word of God.

John 1:1-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:15. Tradition means what is handed down under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

12. *With what does the Bible provide apologists?* [9]

The Bible provides apologists with proof, persuasion and piety.

Also evangelists proclaiming the Gospel; catechists teaching it in detail; **theologians** "relating the saving mysteries one to another and with the ultimate end of man"; and **sinner**s to become saints.

CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

13. *What is special about the Catholic Church?* [15+6]

Only the Catholic Church has unbroken continuity with the apostolic Church founded by Christ, over two millennia and world-wide.

Our Separated Brethren broke away out of human weaknesses.

14. *What does the Catholic Church teach?* [21+11]

The Catholic Church teaches that **Jesus Christ is God's Son and our Saviour, that He calls all to join His Church, which upholds the Real Presence, Confession, Our Lady and the Pope.**

See CFCDE pp. 15; 31-35; 44; 70-73; 74-75; 116-117; 46-47. St Vincent de Lerins (f 450) spoke of "What has been believed everywhere, always, and by all." St Augustine (354-430) said, "In essential things unity, in unessentials liberty, in all things charity."

MODERN SCIENCE

15. *How does religion regard modern science?* [19]
Religion gives God the glory when modern science discovers in His Creation more and more order, design and usefulness.

Herein 'modern science' means the **physical sciences** and not knowledge generally. Science is a **Godly study**. "The whole earth is full of His glory", Isaiah 6:3; Wisdom 7:17 (cf. 18-22); Psalm 115[113B]:1. **The Scientific Method** was formalized in recent centuries, though unformulated it was much used for cooking, medicine, agriculture, architecture, weapons, detective work, etc. See its use in Daniel 1:12-13 and Acts 5:38-39.

16. *How do scientists regard religion?* [21]
Many scientists regard astronomy and biology as support for a religious world-view but some philosophers appeal to science against it

We don't confuse **scientific facts and theories** with the philosophy of some scientists. An ordered universe is not an accident, nor can life emerge by chance. See Lennox in Further Reading, below.

Pseudo-Science

17. *What is naturalism?* [24]
Naturalism is the blind faith of some scientists who insist without proof or evidence that there is no God and nothing but evolving matter.

See Lennox in Further Reading; cf. Psalm 14[13].

18. *What are some scientific difficulties with evolution?*
Some scientific difficulties with evolution are:-
1. missing links;
2. fossils that never evolved;
3. polystrate fossils;
4. vertical strata from fast flow deposits;
5. origins of life;
6. irreducible complexity;
7. coded knowledge in DNA;
8. contradictions in radiometric dating. [33]

Occam's Razor — that the simplest explanation to explain all the facts is to be preferred — is good philosophy and good science.

RELATIVISM: life without meaning

19. *What does relativism reject?* [14+8]
Relativism rejects the reality of true and false, beautiful and ugly, right and wrong, and lives in a world of virtual reality.

Relativism can be a self-deception for Godlessness, amorality and immorality, and is neither practical nor scientific, cf. Isaiah 5:20.

MORALITY and Natural Moral Law

20. *What is morality?* [19+16]
Morality is God's law written on human hearts as the Maker's Instructions to suit man's dignity, duty and destiny, and can largely be discovered by human reason and also is revealed in the Ten Commandments.

Romans 2:15; Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 20:1-17; CFCDE p. 22. The ancient pagans in Babylon knew six of the Commandments but not how exalted God was, nor of keeping a Sabbath, nor the morality of inner thoughts. Christianity enriches morality with supernatural charity of the love of God above all and of neighbour for God's sake.

EVIL

21. *What is evil?* [10]

Evil is the absence of a good that should be there.

Thus evil is not created by God, but permitted by Him. Life-experience and Bible bear witness to **original sin**. Natural disasters can be God punishing or testing us. Moral evil is the absence of a **moral good** that should be there, a **sinful misuse of created things** by man or rebel angel. 'Should', 'ought', 'must' are in-built in our thinking and even the relativists use these words. Atheists often replace morality with "political correctness" in evolutionism, feminism, racism, environmentalism, etc.

NEW AGE RELIGION

22. *What is wrong with New Age religion?* [17]

New Age religion blends pantheism and pop-psychology with the occult, superstitions, eastern religions and pseudo-science.

Pantheism says everything is God, hence the modern paganism of almost worshipping our planet and environment. Pop-psychology is made up of half-truths and rather mindless slogans.

MARRIAGE and children

23. *Summarize morality for marriage.* [13]
Intercourse requires marriage; marriage requires openness to new life; new life requires intercourse.

i.e. no fornication, adultery or divorce; no contraception; no IVF.

Life-issues

24. *What is wrong with abortion?* [9+13]
Abortion murders babies in the womb with callous cruelty, negates the right to life of everyone and makes a mother's problems worse.

The culture of death has spread like moral cancer since the 1970s.

25. *What is wrong with euthanasia?* [21]
Euthanasia is a direct attack on human life. It is suicide by the patient and murder by a doctor or nurse.

The Hippocratic Oath was that "the first thing to do is not to do any harm," *primum non nocere*. Even a good end does not justify an evil mean, Romans 3:8. Civil laws legalizing voluntary suicide always seem to lead on to killing without consultation and for money and 'spare parts'. God's will is that bodily evils of pain and anguish be borne for the salvation of souls.

FURTHER READING

- **Sheehan's Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine** edited by Father Peter Joseph, 664pp: an essential reference for apologetic topics, with everything easy to find in a superb Table of Contents, diagrams, tabulations, and an Index to an uncluttered wealth of detail.
- Defend the Faith** by Robert M. Haddad, 512pp.
- God's Undertaker — Has Science Buried God?** by Professor John Lennox against Professor Richard Dawkins using *argumentum ad hominem* (n. 3 above).
- RSV 2nd Catholic Edition** with sub-headings and clear cross-references, textual variants and explanations.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church Second Edition**, especially its Glossary, pp. 864-904.
- Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition II** (CFCDE) by Father James Tierney