

# Ideas for a Catholic Family Apologetics Catechism

## prior to a Handouts of 50 Q & As, then a complete book

**CATHOLIC Christianity is built on God's gift of faith and grace.** Catholic Christians should be able to help others towards this Gospel faith.

St Peter and St Paul were persuasive in speech and letter, by the goodness of their lives, the **beauty** of their message and its **truth** harmonizing with human reason. Other early apologists were Aristides A.D. 125 to Emperor Hadrian, and St Justin Martyr to Emperor and Senate 155.

**Apologetics is human reasoning in support of the faith.** It is not an apology, is not saying "sorry", but persuasion. We cannot prove the faith by reason, rather reason helps remove objections and clarifies obscurities.

Theology itself is *faith seeking understanding*, and the relating of the Christian mysteries one to another and to the ultimate end of man.

### **ST PETER — the key text: 1 Peter 3:15**

Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy everyone that asks you a **reason for the hope which is in you.**

### **ST PAUL — apologetics: Acts 17 (numbers are verses)**

<sup>22</sup>Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>For passing by and seeing your idols, I found also an altar on which was written, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship without knowing it, that I preach to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, He being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, <sup>25</sup>neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing it is He Who gives to all life and breath and all things: <sup>26</sup>and has made of one all mankind to dwell upon the face of the earth, and determined appointed times and the limits of their habitation, <sup>27</sup>that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet He is not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup>for 'in Him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' <sup>29</sup>Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. <sup>30</sup>The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead." <sup>32</sup>Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Acts 17:22-33; cf. 14:14-16.

### **NOTES ON ST PAUL**

- v. 22: St Paul begins with kindly observations.
- v. 23. Thus he started from their "unknown God".
- v. 24. The concept of a Creator of the whole world was a big new mind-blowing idea.
- v. 25. He avoided flatly contradicting them but went on to assert the Creator's transcendence, unlike the Greek gods.
- v. 27. God is also immanent, close at hand with a personal Providence for each man within the great human family.
- v. 28. St. Paul 'wears his scholarship lightly'.
- v. 29. Idols are unworthy of God and of man.
- v. 30. On this apologetics, St Paul announced the Gospel like a herald: "Repent!" cf. Mark 1:15.
- v. 31. God's judgement is guaranteed by Christ's Resurrection.
- v. 31. The scoffers and the seekers are still with us.

### **STARTING POINT: "where they're at"**

**IN OTHER contexts** (read Acts), St Paul changed his approach when speaking to the Jews of the Diaspora with the proselytes from paganism and honest pagan enquirers. (If you don't know "diaspora", look it up in a dictionary — always use the tools at hand.)

With our pagans today, the more science you know, the better for your credibility. Besides, it's wonderful evidence for God's signature on His works in the world.

### **Apologetics for BELIEVERS**

This is for Catholic homes and believers at Catholic schools. Its purpose is to:-

- fortify their minds with ideas, their wills with ideals;
- equip them to help others with difficulties and doubts;
- deepen their spiritual life of prayer and sacraments.

### **Apologetics for PROTESTANTS**

The Separated Brethren often have a foundation of Sunday School and Bible. Hence start with:-

- Jesus is Himself THE WORD of God: John 1:1,14.
- The Church wrote the Bible: it's her book! 2Thess2:15.
- Topics: Real Presence; Confession; Mary; the Pope.

### **Apologetics for DISBELIEVERS**

Disbelievers, erstwhile believers, gave in to doubts/difficulties posed by the world, the flesh & the Devil:-

- Help them return to praying morning and night.
- Say, 'Time on earth is testing & training for eternity.'
- Work through their difficulties and doubts.
- Help them towards Mass, Confession, Communion.
- Modernist and lapsed Catholics, like some Protestants, have a creed listing what they no longer believe in.

### **Apologetics for UNBELIEVERS**

These are pagans who never knew Christ or heeded His Church. We begin like St Paul at Athens:-

- Start with God, the soul and the goodness of creation.
- What are we here for? who and what are we?
- Religion is about God and His plan for man;
- Science is about some aspects of God's creation.
- Atheism/materialism are not experimental science at all, rather they come from false philosophical thinking.

## **APOLOGETICS after "God" and "the soul"**

- OT & NT like other ancient documents are historical.
- Revelation is God speaking to us by holy prophets.
- Miracles are a signature of authenticity from God:  
    rejecting miracles verified scientifically is quite unscientific; e.g. Shroud of Turin, Lourdes, Fatima, canonization miracles.
- Hence Divinity of Christ: Incarnation and Trinity.
- Christ began and guaranteed His Church.
- This Church is one, holy, Catholic and apostolic.
- Church guarantees God's inspiration of OT & NT.

## **Apologetics on PARTICULAR PROBLEMS**

- Problem of evil: God won't override our freewill.
- Crusades were legitimate defence against invasion.
- Inquisitions: well-intentioned but marred by cruelty.
- Bad Popes and other scandals.
- Evolution and other pseudo-science.
- Marital sins: fornication, adultery, divorce, IVF, masturbation, contraception, sodomy, pornography.

## **APOLOGETICS is not enough**

We must be warm hearted as well as hard headed..

Either without the other is damaging. (Reject the cynicism that history is the triumph of the heartless over the mindless!)

Warm Fuzzy = Warm feelings + fuzzy thinking = gushy emotionalism + doctrinal confusion. Mush and Gush religious education cast aside the Holy Trinity and the Holy Family and there was "no room in the inn" for apologetics.

## **LIMITATIONS of apologetics**

- Apologetics is a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- Don't alienate slow-believers with dreary proofs;
- rather, explain persuasively *what & why we believe*.
- Ideas are received with the recipient's (in-)capacity.
- Limitations of wordly wisdom: 1 Corinthians 1:17-24 etc.

## **THE ARTS of an apologist**

### **Strategy for Meetings**

Do not aim so much to convince a hostile lecturer as to convince Ms audience by politely refuting him.

The apologist must always be respectful, kind and firm.

### **The Argument called *Argumentum ad Hominem***

*Ad Hominem* means "to the man": it refutes his objections by arguing from his own principles, like a *ju jitsu* wrestler using an attacker's muscle to defeat him.

When the Pharisees and Herodians challenged Christ about paying tribute to Caesar, He called for a coin: "Whose likeness is this?" They said, "Caesar's." He rejoined, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Again, when atheists are on the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI), ask them. "How would you recognize it?" They reply, "Radio signals that appear ordered, not chaotic, must come from an intelligence." You rejoined, "Then explain the order in the DNA of living cells." They fall back on, "Evolution over squillions of years can produce anything." You go for the jugular: "But evolution is chance, without order, design, intelligence." They are confounded, but still refuse to believe in God as the Supreme Orderer, Designer, Intelligence.

## **RESOLUTIONS for apologetics**

- Morning & Night Prayers; meditations on Psalms.
- Prayers before & after Sunday Mass & Communion.
- Regular Confession for spiritual growth.
- "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ".
- Other *spiritual* nourishment: St Francis de Sales etc.

## **VIRTUES for apologists — BASIC:**

- **Cardinal:** prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance
- **Theological:** faith, hope, charity (= patience + kindness)

## **PARTICULAR:**

- **Be humble**, laugh at yourself, blame yourself.
- **Listen** carefully, encouragingly and don't interrupt.
- **Know** your Doctrine and learn Bible texts by heart.
- **Enrich** your mindset from noble minds of literature, fiction, history, philosophy.

N.B. Tolerance, sincerity, commitment etc are only good when they are about good, not when they are about evil.

## **POPULAR INTELLECTUAL SUICIDE**

Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashionable.

## **Living without Meaning**

*What are we here on earth for?*

**We are here on earth because God made us to know, love and serve Him, and to see and enjoy Him forever in Heaven.**

Atheists have no answer to our question, so they say there is none. Yet they cannot prove there is no answer, and *our* answer is both good and beautiful. We must help them come to see it is true. Life on earth is a testing and training time for judgement and a future destiny of Heaven or Hell.

cf. Hebrews 11:6.

## **Living ignorant of our status**

*What is man?*

**Man is a creature of God with a soul made in His image intelligent, free and responsible, and with a body procreated by parents.**

Dare the atheists to *live scientifically!* Dare them to do the experiment, to try praying, see how it works; try believing; try keeping the Ten Commandments; try the Golden Rule, Beatitudes, and Christ's Law of Love. In this way they might discover our human dignity, duty, destiny.

## **Living without truth, beauty, goodness & God**

*What does relativism reject?*

**Relativism rejects right and wrong, true and false, beautiful and ugly, and lives in a world of virtual reality.**

Relativism does not suit practical situations, but is used at need by atheists, sceptics, the amoral and immoral, cf. Isaiah 5:20.

## **Believing pseudo-Science**

*What is naturalism?*

**Naturalism is blind faith in scientists who insists without proof or evidence that there is only matter and no God.**

cf. Psalm 1 [13]

Naturalism, materialism, secularism, atheism: all go together.

## **PERSONAL LIBRARY — Basic:**

- Bible: suggest *RSV 2<sup>nd</sup> Catholic Edition*
- Dictionary (best are encyclopaedic and with derivations)
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church (Second Edition)*
- *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition* pp. 17,23.
- *Sunday Missal* (new translations expected soon).

### **Extended:**

- *Sheehan's Apologetics & Catholic Doctrine*
- Documents of Vatican II
- *The Code of Canon Law* (very good for definitions)
- *Bibles on Computer* (far superior to any Concordance)
- *Science is a Sacred Cow*, Standen, 1950 (from internet)