

❑ Misquoting of Scripture

Much anti-Catholic propaganda is also based upon Scripture being quoted out of context or being misinterpreted. The text in which Christ forbids his followers to call any man “father” is taken as a condemnation of the Catholic practice of calling priests “father”; yet St Paul often applies the title to himself (1 Cor 4:14-15), while St John addresses his letters to “fathers” in the Christian community (1 Jn 1:12). At the same time many Protestant teachings simply are not biblical at all. A typical Protestant teaching, for example, is that Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura) is the source of truth: yet you will find nothing that supports this statement anywhere in Scripture. Fundamentalists claim to base their faith wholly on Scripture; but most of the time they ignore the work of scholars who have spent a lifetime trying to understand the real meaning of what Scripture tells us.

❑ What people have found in the Catholic Church

What is it that ex-Catholics and ardent Protestant ministers have found missing in their churches? A. They have found that Scripture accurately reflects what the Catholic Church has always taught while many Protestant doctrines misrepresent what the Bible teaches or give only a very limited version of it. B. They have found enormous spiritual power in the Catholic sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. C. They have found that Catholic beliefs and practices have been present in the Church since the earliest times and that Protestantism (particularly fundamentalism) has lost these. D. They have found Catholics share the same beliefs the world over: there is a fixed standard of truth that comes from the Holy Spirit. E. They have found the Catholic church very different from the show (and sometimes sham) that often characterises fundamentalist worship services. They have found a sober and rational faith rather than a highly emotional cauldron of doubtful miracles and revelations.

Karl Cooper writes: “In the Catholic Church I have found a warm welcome, unconditional love which reflects the unconditional grace of God, and a steady

involvement with a liturgical tradition that has grown organically from its beginnings in the apostolic age” (“Journeys Home”: see below)

❑ Come home to where you belong

So we invite people who have left to consider returning to their spiritual mother. We invite those who are involved in other denominations to look seriously at what Catholics believe and why they adhere to these beliefs. We invite Catholics who are thinking of leaving to re-examine their faith and see whether they thoroughly understand what Catholics actually believe.

To assist those who want to understand the Catholic faith we have prepared a number of tracts explaining what the Catholic church teaches and the basis for this in Scripture.

Quotations from “Journeys Home”, edited by Marcus C Grodi, Queenship Publishing Company, Santa Barbara, CA 1997

For Further Information Contact:

Pope John Paul II Society of Evangelists

14818 Ranchero Road

Hesperia, California, USA

Telephone: 760-220-6818

FAX: 760-948-7620

E-mail: pjpiisoe@earthlink.net

www.pjpiisoe.org

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COMING HOME TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

❑ Jesus is the only way to the Father

Jesus said that he was the only way to the Father, and the only way in which men can be saved. Yet a scandal we have today is that many Christian churches claim to teach in Jesus’ name but often disagree amongst each other. Catholics believe that the fullness of truth is in the original church and that denominations that have split off from it have lost some of the truth he left us. Protestants and Pentecostals on the other hand claim that the Catholic church does not teach or seems to have lost sight of fundamental and essential truths and practices. Protestants have often joined the Catholic church because they have found vital doctrine in the Catholic faith that they have missed. Catholics join Protestant denominations because vital issues that they have not accepted or understood as part of Catholic faith have now become clear to them and they want to cross over to a denomination that makes the basics clearer and more vivid. **Yet there is no right doctrine that Protestants and Pentecostals teach that has not come to them through the Catholic Church.**

❑ We must accept and live out all that Christ teaches

The solution to the problem is of course that we must know and live fully all that Christ has taught. Christ commands his disciples in Mt 28:19-20 to teach all he has given them. Throughout the history of the church the problem has been that aspects of Christ’s doctrine are lost, and the temptation is for people who notice that something is downplayed to start their own dissident group, disregarding Lk 10:16 where we are told that those listening to the authority of the church are listening to Christ himself. And because everything is in the Catholic faith, though sometimes obscured, we must all stay Catholic or return to it if we have left the Catholic faith (see James 5:19), but draw out all the treasures of our faith and live them to the full.

☐ Scripture only

Much Protestant theology depends on the notion that Scripture is the sole source of truth. Yet in Jn 21:25 we read not everything is in Scripture. In 1 Tim 3: 15 we read that the Church is the pillar of faith, not the Bible. In 1 Cor 11:2 we are urged to hold on to all the traditions we have been taught.

☐ We should all be united

Christ prayed at the last Supper that his disciples would remain united as he and the Father are (John 17:11). Yet everywhere today we have the spectacle of a divided Christianity. This has arisen because people have been dissatisfied with what the original church taught and have started break away movements. Yet Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would be with the Church, guiding into all truth (John 16:13). And so those have joined denominations that have broken away from the Catholic Church or were born in them have had to ask themselves why they are in churches that split off from the original universal Church, ie the Catholic Church. They have also have had to ask themselves why their beliefs differ from those of the original Church which was promised the guidance of the Spirit to remain in the truth and whose leader was given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 16:18-19). Far from condoning dissident groups of Christians, they are strongly condemned in Scripture. The understanding is that the church is to be one under Peter and the apostles and those who isolate themselves are suspect. 2 Peter 2:1 warns of false teachers spreading bad doctrine. Christ himself warns about false prophets leading people astray, even while performing miracles.

☐ A stream of converts over the centuries

For these reasons for centuries the Catholic Church has received a steady stream of very prominent converts from other religions or no religion at all. In the last century, John Henry Newman (later Cardinal Newman) in England led a strong movement of

clergy and laity into the Catholic Church. The movement of ministers from Protestant denominations has been so substantial that the Church has made special provisions for them to join the priesthood, with their wives and families. In the USA a number of Protestant ministers have converted to the Catholic Church. Some had been virulently anti-Catholic and had even been instrumental in drawing Catholics to other denominations. Some of them have called their experience “coming home” because they regard the Catholic Church as the source of all Christian truth and that other denominations have broken away from it. A ministry known as the Coming Home Network International headed by Marcus Grodi has been established to assist former Protestant clergy, and has published a number of books and produced several videos.

In addition many Catholics who have given up the Catholic faith and joined fundamentalist or neo-Pentecostal groups have returned to Catholicism.

☐ Why are Protestant ministers converting?

Why is it that Protestant ministers, some of them eminent theologians, have gone over to the Catholic Church? Was it because of some row that had with their own denomination and they wanted to join the ministry of the Catholic Church? That is not the case at all. What has happened is that these were men of great integrity who left the ministry in their own denominations after reflection and came to the Catholic Church and joined it usually as ordinary lay folk, giving up all the prestige and authority that they had as highly successful pastors.

☐ Costly decisions

It was a very costly decision: they lost their friends and even their families wanted nothing further to do with them. Kris Franklin found half of her family could not cope with her becoming Catholic, and family members did not contact her for a year after conversion (also mentioned in “Journey’s Home”, listed below) They came because they felt that this was where the Holy Spirit was leading them. Dr Paul

Thigpen was asked by his wife, Leisa: “You’ll never be happy outside the Catholic Church, will you?”. He replied: “It’s becoming a matter of conscience. I feel as if I’d be disobeying God if I didn’t” (“Journey Home”: see below). They came often after years of agonizing about doubts they had about Protestant positions on doctrinal issues. Some have written books and produced videos explaining their conversion to Catholicism.

☐ Why are former Catholics returning?

Why is it that former Catholics have returned in large numbers from fundamentalist churches? Perhaps we ought to start by asking why they left in the first place. Many left because they did not understand the Catholic faith and were swept off their feet by quotations from Scripture that seemed to contradict what they had been taught. Others found that Catholic worship services were not inspiring and that they were not gaining spiritual benefit from them. They came back because they felt that something was missing in Protestant belief and worship. They also discovered that valuable spiritual truths that they thought were only to be found in Protestant churches had originally come from the Catholic church and were still present in it.

☐ Misrepresentations of Catholic belief

One of the most disturbing things about anti-Catholic polemic is that much of it completely misrepresents what Catholics believe. David Palm writes in his testimony that “we were taught the Catholic Church had usurped the Bible by adding layers of ‘human tradition’ to it and that the Church deceives millions by teaching them that they are saved by good works”(“Journeys Home”: see below) Not only does it not state accurately what Catholicism believes in: some have no scruples about resorting to outright falsehoods to the extent of spreading malicious lies about the Catholic church. Ignorant Catholics have been caught up in this propaganda: fortunately some have returned to the Catholic Church.