

A Catholic Catechesis: Biblical Apologetics

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SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This on-line class will serve as a survey of the origin and development of Roman Catholic Christianity from the period of the apostolic church, through the post apostolic church and into the conciliar movement. Principal attention will be paid to the biblical basis of both doctrine and dogma as well as the role of paradosis, i.e., handing-on the truth, in the history of the Church. Particular attention will also be made to the hierarchical founding and succession of leadership throughout the centuries. The role of the new Catholic Catechism in the contemporary church will be studied.

COURSE PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to orient students to the biblical origins of the Roman Catholic Church, its history, its organization, its doctrinal development, and its sacramental and devotional life. The course will take a strong scriptural position, utilizing the classical apologetical or reasoned approach of proof. Students wishing to know the teachings of the Catholic Church from its own believers will find this an exhilarating classroom experience.

PERSONAL NOTE TO STUDENTS

Some time in the 1980s, while founding and teaching at an Evangelical university, I was amazed that so many other Christians did not know or understand where I, as a Catholic, was coming from and why I would be willing to teach at an evangelical university. As more and more students and teaching colleagues would ask questions of me about my Catholicism, I started collecting the questions and issues that were brought up. It came to a point I knew that I wanted to write a response to the questions of others in an orderly and progressive way. Then I realized that I had just defined what the word "apologetic" meant. Hence the origin of the eBook around which this class is built. For years, a Catholic colleague of mine, Paul Flanagan, and I started teaching the class wherever we were welcome, including at the Evangelical university itself. We used acetates to structure the content and present the many scriptures to which we were going to refer. That eventually gave way to the new technology, the computer and the software PowerPoint. This class and its content has become a passion of mine and now occupies my retirement years entirely. Together, again, with Paul, this Web site has been developed and it lies ready for you to use and learn. May you find answers to all your questions about the Catholic Church.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. To present the biblical basis for the origin and development of the Roman Catholic Church.
- B. To present the development of the canon of Scripture and evolution of biblical teaching in the Church.
- C. To understand the role of paradosis/tradition in the oral transmission of revelation.
- D. To study the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and its role in the origin and development of doctrine in the conciliar movement in the Church.
- E. To understand the revelation, doctrinal development and practice of a sacramental life in the history of the Church until Vatican Council II.
- F. To study the role of the Holy Spirit as teaching authority in the Church.
- G. To study the revelation and development of hierarchical authority in the Church.
- H. To understand the hierarchy of truth in the Church as well as the role of private devotion and personal growth in holiness in the Church.

PREREQUISITES

An openness to the understanding of the faith and practice of Roman Catholicism with an interest in the history of an ancient church is all that is necessary to take this course.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Robert J. Schihl and Paul Flanagan, *Catholic Biblical Apologetics*, at catholicapologetics.org (click on [E-Book Download](#))

New American Bible or New American Bible Revised

Reference Only:

--- , *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1994).

Raymond Brown, S.S., Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland Murphy, O.Carm., (1990). *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

OBJECTIVES

The student who successfully completes this course should be able:

- A. To trace the history and teachings of the Roman Catholic faith and the origin of the canon of the Bible.
- B. To utilize the principles of Catholic hermeneutics.
- C. To explain the biblical and theological arguments for Catholic doctrine and practice.
- D. To differentiate the similarities and differences between the two streams of paradosis or handing-on truth in the history of the Church, oral tradition and written tradition.
- E. To articulate the biblical arguments for the sacramental life of the Church.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Order of Topics

Being Catholic and Christian: Faith and Salvation
Divine Revelation "by letter" (2 Thess 2:15): the Bible
Divine Revelation "by word of mouth" (2 Thess 2:15)
Truth Handling and Trustworthy Men: Teaching Authority
The Sacraments: the Life of the Christian I
The Communion of Saints
Mary: Mother of God, Saint
Eschatology: The Last Things

BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the Roman Catholic foundations for Sacred Scripture:

Raymond Brown, S.S, Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland Murphy, O.Carm., (1990). *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

- (1970). *The New World Dictionary-Concordance to the New American Bible*. World Bible Publishers.

For English translations of Vatican Council II documents:

Walter Abbott, S.J., (1966). *The Documents of Vatican II*. The America Press, New York City, New York.
Austin Flannery, O.P., (1981). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Costello Publishing Co., Northport, New York.

For biblical references as bases for Catholic theology and belief:

M. Nicolau, S.J. and J. Salaverri, S.J., (1958). *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, 4th Ed., Biblioteca De Autores Christianos, Matriti.
Alan Schreck, (1984). *Catholic and Christian: An Explanation of Commonly Misunderstood Catholic Beliefs*. Servant Books, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
Albert H. Boudreau, (1983). *The Born-Again Catholic*. Living Flame Press, Locust Valley, New York.

For the Fathers of the Church and their teachings:

Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., (1975). *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.
John Willis, S.J.,(1966). *The Teachings of the Church Fathers*. Herder and Herder, New York.

For the teachings of the ecumenical councils:

John Clarkson, S.J., John Edwards, S.J., John Kelly, S.J., and John Welch, S.J., (1962). *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*. Herder and Herder, St. Louis, Missouri.

For the genealogy of Christian communities:

Robert C. Walton, (1986). *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*. Academie Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

For general historical facts:

L. Bram, R. Phillips, and N. Dickey, (Eds.), (1983). *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*. Funk & Wagnalls: New York.
J. H. Leith, (Ed.), (1982). *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, (3rd edition). John Knox Press: Atlanta, GA.
J. N. D. Kelly, (1989). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Popes*. Oxford University Press: New York.
E. A. Livingstone, (Ed.) (1990). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford University Press: New York.
Alan Schreck, (1987). *The Compact History of the Catholic Church*. Servant Books: Ann Arbor: MI.
H. Chadwick, (1986). *The Early Church*. Dorset Press: New York.
H. Bettenson,(1967). *Documents of the Christian Church*, (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press: New York.

Additional reading:

William C. Most, (1986). *Catholic Apologetics Today: Answers to Modern Critics*. TAN Books and Publishers, Inc.: Rockford, IL.
P. J. Glenn, (1980). *Apologetics: A Philosophic Defense and Explanation of the Catholic Religion*. TAN Books and Publishers, Inc.:Rockford, IL.
W. C. Paris, (1971). *Biblical Catechetics after Vatican I*. The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN.
R. J. Neuhaus, (1987). *The Catholic Moment: The Paradox of the Church in the Postmodern World*. Harper & Row: San Francisco, CA.