



One Out of Every 10 Americans Is an Ex-Catholic **by Joe Sixpack**

Alarming isn't it? But that's right! One out of every 10 Americans is an ex-Catholic—yes, a full 10% of our nation. If they were a separate denomination, they would be the third-largest denomination in the United States, after Catholics and Baptists. You may not be reading this in America, but the statistics in your country probably aren't very different.

The alarm doesn't stop there. 79% of former Catholics leave the Church before age 23, 50% of young people who were raised Catholic are no longer Catholic today, and 6.5 people leave Catholicism for every one that joins. There are many other alarming statistics, but I don't have room for them here. There are almost as many reasons for people leaving the Church as there are people walking out the door. But the point is that the bulk of people leaving the Church are young people.

If we want to stanch the flow of blood pouring out of the veins of the Mystical Body of Christ, there are a few things we need to think about. Statistics show that 70% of Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. I assert that this is not correct. It is my contention that they were never really taught about it in the first place!

We went through a terrible era of the Church's history from the late 1960s, through the 1970s, and into the early 1980s where catechesis was so weak it was almost nonexistent. And the unfortunate reality is that those who are teaching the faith today were the students who were cheated out of good catechesis from the 1960s through the 1980s. Who's fault was it? Who knows? Who cares? The only thing that matters is today and what we can do about the future.

Every Catholic has a responsibility to share the faith. When talking to young people, it is important to remember that the vast majority of them don't believe in God. We have covered proof of God's existence in previous articles, and we will do so again. But apart from proving the existence of God, you also have to be able to prove why the Bible is the inspired word of God. After all, Islam claims that the Koran is inspired, texts from some eastern religions claim to be inspired, and even the works of Mary Baker Eddy (founder of Christian Science) are said to be inspired. The mere claim of inspiration does not make it so. We have to be able to prove that the Bible is inspired, and only Christianity can do that. Indeed, only the Catholic Church can prove it definitively.

Before I give a short explanation of how to prove the Bible is the inspired word of God, let's crush a few myths about the Bible. First, the Bible came from the Church, not the other way around. The Catholic Church produced the Bible nearly 400 years *after* Christ founded Church. Second, it is not the sole rule of faith. If it were, the Christians of the first 400 years would have had no chance of salvation. There are a number of other myths I would like challenge about the Bible, but doing so would exclude the argument for the proof of inspiration in this article!

Our first step is to approach the Bible as we would any other ancient work. From textual criticism we are able to conclude that we have a text that is accurate. Indeed, we are more certain of the Bible's accuracy than any other ancient work. For all the works of classical antiquity we have to depend on manuscripts long after their original composition. The author who is the best case in this respect is Virgil, and the earliest manuscript of Virgil that we now possess was written some 350 years after his death. For all other classical writers, the interval between the death of the author and the earliest extant manuscript of his work is much greater. For Livy it was about 500 years, for Horace 900, for most of Plato 1300, and for Euripides 1600. Yet no one seriously disputes that we have accurate copies of the works of these writers.

Not only are the biblical manuscripts we have older than those for classical authors, we have in absolute numbers far more manuscripts to work from. Some are whole books of the Bible, others fragments of just a few words, but there are thousands of manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and other languages. What this means is that we can be sure we have an accurate text, and we can work from it in confidence.

Next we look at what the Bible, considered merely as history, tells us. We examine the account of Jesus' life and death and his reported resurrection. Using what is in the Gospels themselves, what we find in extra-biblical writings from the early centuries, and what we know of human nature, we conclude that Jesus either was what He claimed to be, God, or He was a mad man. (The one thing we know He could not have been was merely a good man who was not God, because no merely good man would make the claims He made.)

We're able to eliminate His being a madman not just from He said—no mad man ever spoke as He did... for that matter, no sane man ever did either—but from what His followers did after His death. The hoax of an empty tomb is one thing, but you don't find people dying for a hoax. The result of this line of reasoning is that we must conclude that Jesus indeed rose from the dead and that He was therefore God and, being God, meant what He said and did what He said he would do.

One thing He said He would do was found a Church, and from both the Bible (still taken as merely as a historical book) and other ancient works, we see that Christ established a Church with the rudiments of all we see in the Catholic Church today—papacy, hierarchy, priesthood, sacraments, teaching authority, and, as a consequence of the last, infallibility. Christ's Church, to do what he said it would do, had to have the note of infallibility.

We have thus taken purely historical material and concluded that there exists a Church, which is the Catholic Church, divinely protected against teaching error.

Now for the last part of the argument, which is that the Church tells us the Bible is inspired, and we can take the Church's word for it precisely because the Church is infallible. Only after having been told by a properly constituted authority (that is, one set up by God to assure us of the truth in matters of faith) that the Bible is inspired do we begin to use it as an inspired book.

Note that this is not a circular argument. We are not basing the inspiration of the Bible on the Church's infallibility and the Church's infallibility on the word of an inspired Bible. That would indeed be a circular argument. What we really have here is a spiral argument. On the first level we argue to the reliability of the Bible as history. From that we conclude an infallible Church was founded. Then we take the word of that infallible Church that the Bible is inspired. It reduces to the proposition that, without the existence of the Church, we could not tell if the Bible were inspired.

That's your thumbnail lesson in proving the inspiration of sacred Scripture. There is much more, but we simply don't have the room. You can learn more and ask questions at JoeSixpackAnswers.com because that's *What We Believe... Why We Believe It*.