

Nineveh's Crossing

*Exploring Faith, Values, & History with Educational and
Entertainment Media, Through the lens of Roman Catholicism*

Easter Sunday, April 12, 2009
HE IS RISEN, INDEED!

Dear Phyllis:

Regarding the enclosed "material" you sent, and a request for a reply.

The crux of so much of this anti-Catholic material is laughable in a way. It all commits logical fallacies called either the STRAWMAN fallacy, or the fallacy of EQUIVOCATION, or the fallacy of DIFVOCATION (aka "distinction without a difference").

In the strawman fallacy a false position is raised about something, and then it is shot down. It's typical of adolescents who says to his parents "You hate me because you never give me anything." When in fact, the parent has sacrificed left and right, hither and yon, but refuses to give the kids things that would do him or her harm. Well, the tactic plays out in anti-Catholic circles. For example, people that hate Catholicism will claim that the Catholics are taught to worship Mary. Then they quote verses from the Bible that say only God should be worshiped. Well, the fact is that Catholic teaching ONLY allows God to be worshiped, and never anything else, including the mother of Jesus. So their claim about Catholicism is false, and their argument without validity. Catholics love and honor the mother of Jesus just as Jesus loved and honored his mother. We should be like Christ, right? Then we should do what Jesus did? Did he love and honor his mother? How simple is this?

In the difvocation fallacy two different words or phrases are pitted against each other (they are vocalized differently) but then they are claimed to mean exactly the same thing. When it comes to the fallacy of DIFVOCATION those that hate Catholicism will say that Catholics are taught to HONOR Mary, which is true. But then the arguers will claim that there is no difference between the concept of HONOR and WORSHIP. But, in fact, there is a huge difference, and to Catholics the concept of "honor" is far different from "worship." We are told, for instance, to honor our mother and father, but we are not told to worship them, or even obey when instructed to do something immoral.

In the equivocation fallacy two words that sound the same, and perhaps are spelled the same (equal vocalization) are given two different definitions by the different parties. It sounds and looks like they are talking about the same thing but in fact the underlying definitions are different, and so no agreement can be reached. When it comes to the fallacy of equivocation those that hate Catholicism will say that the Eucharist is a graven image because it is made by man. Their physical senses claim that the host (bread) and blood (wine) are bread and wine not the body and blood of Christ. The equivocation involves the term Eucharist, which to the Catholic hater means "just bread and wine, thus a graven image" but to the Catholic Eucharist indicates "a miracle of substance, changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, not caused or made by man." Where the writer of the literature you sent has it in his or her mind

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that MAN made the bread and wine, to the Catholic it is GOD that not only made the substance of the bread and wine, but through a miracle change it's inherent substance into the real presence of Christ. The Eucharist is a gift from GOD, not a gift from MAN.

Equivocation is also involved with the word "prayer" or "pray." While pray can mean to "worship" it can also mean to "request" or "communicate" with those in heaven. The material you sent suggest that prayer can ONLY mean worship, so when we pray to Mary or other Saints we are worshipping them. But Catholicism has never, NEVER used the word prayer that way when referring to those in heaven.

By the way, the skeptic will see the host and cup at Mass and using their physical senses (not faith) will claim that these elements of communion are only bread and wine, because the physical senses tell him so. But this is "COMMUNION" with Christ, as well as one another. Think about the deep meaning of that word—communion—as you read the rest of this paragraph. The skeptics at the time of Christ looked upon Christ and saw only a man. Their physical senses told them that Jesus didn't glow in the night, or walk on air; Christ appeared totally human. Therefore, Jesus couldn't be God. But you believe Jesus was God and is God still today. If God can become man (think of the size of that miracle) why do you claim that God cannot change wine in to his blood. I mean didn't Jesus turn water into wine? Why is the miracle of the Eucharist so hard to believe? Are you totally without faith? Is your heart so hard that God's love cannot penetrate with his gift, his presence? We are called to be "one with Christ". What better way to have a personal relationship with Christ than to make him PHYSICALLY and SPIRITUALLY part of your body each day during Mass. Do you trust Jesus with your life, or are YOU the one to define the terms of your relationship with God? Are you going to worship God's understanding of his redemption for you, or does it have to agree with your limited, human, finite, corrupt understanding? Is this about your faith in God's power? Or is it about your lack of faith in God's supremacy?

So, Phyllis, avoid such fallacies. They are the source of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, if not outward lies. And they will crush your faith and limited God's power in your life to work miracles.

Now, let's go back to the Eucharist for a moment, and the "real presence" of Christ. This is not very hard to understand to a Christian who has faith in God's miraculous power. DO YOU BELIEVE IN CHRIST'S POWER, AND IN THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER TO WORK MIRACLES HERE ON EARTH? To the skeptic who does not believe in God's power to work miracles then the Catholic concept of the Eucharist is entirely ridiculous. But, look at the first part of John 6, where Jesus changes regular food into a miraculous food that feeds not just a young boy, but thousands sitting on a hillside. To the people eating, the food seemed just like regular food. But to the Apostles this was NOT the same substance. It was changed by the power of Jesus' prayer of blessing upon it and the power of the Holy Spirit. The substance was sacramentally changed. Our senses could not see or taste the difference, but our faith indicates that something is different – miraculously different – because GOD did it, not man. So, this argument that bread made by man can ONLY and EVER be bread made by man and not miraculously changed by God, is entirely ridiculous.

Now, in that same chapter (John 6) Jesus teaches about how it is critically important to eat his body and drink his blood if you will have eternal life within you. He says this sort of thing numerous times, and implies it even more times. Fourteen times in all, I recall. He's talking about something that the first Protestants could not fathom. They said to each other: "How

can he say this" and "It is hard for us." (John 6:52, 60) And in John 6:66 these first protestors to the teachings of the Eucharist (the real presence of Christ in the sacramental bread) leave Jesus and never follow him again.

Whoa! Did you see what just happened? The people today that claim the Eucharist is NOT the real presence of Christ are direct descendents of those that left Christ in John 6:66. This is where the Eucharist began, and it's been in the Church ever since. (And I guess the Protestants have been "in" the church ever since, as well. Woe is me!)

Notice, there was plenty of time for Jesus to say, "Hey, this is only a symbol" it isn't REALLY ME. But he persists, and because the skeptical Jews think Jesus is talking about real body and real blood, they are grossed out and leave. But Jesus doesn't change his teaching, and neither do any of the Apostles in their writings later in the NT, nor does the Early Church fathers in their writings. In fact, Paul and some early bishops point out that those that don't believe in this gift are to be shunned.

Even the word "remembrance" is an equivocation to the uninformed, uneducated Protestant Bible "scholar". They are totally ignorant of what the concept of "remembrance" means to a Jew celebrating the Passover. When the Jews "remember" they are living out the actual events. It is NOT like looking at a picture album and remembering a birthday party. It is very, very different. To Jews reliving the Passover, and to Catholics reliving the crucifixion of Jesus, this is no picture album remembrance, but we are reliving the actual event, by participating in the eternity of God WHERE THERE IS NO TIME. Thus, the term "remembrance" has two entirely different meanings, and those that hate Catholicism can't use their fractured definition to take the place of the real thing that Christian teachers have used since the first century.

Now, I will take time to inform you of one more thing about Catholics and the Bible. And then you need to find a good priest to talk to. (There are bad priests out there whom you need to stay away from.)

First off, you would not have a Bible if it wasn't for the Catholic Church. Who do you think gave you the Bible, approved the books in it (although Protestants ripped out 7 books in the 1800s), and through numerous councils of the Early Church defended and defined such things as the deity of Christ and the Trinity against heretics, and gave us the creeds that explain what it means to be a Christian? Jesus wasn't literally around, so who did all that? Was your Church around to defend these basic Christian principles?

Then, you have a problem that has developed into a scandal. Where Christ prayed for us Christians to be one with no division (John 17), now there are thousands (one source claims 35,000) different Protestant denominations. And it's funny how each one uses the Bible to prove the "church" down the street is wrong. They can't possibly agree on the basic doctrines among themselves but then they have the arrogance to attack the Catholic Church. Have you heard the expression "the pot calling the kettle black?" It's what Protestants do to Catholics. They all use the same Bible but they can't agree on what Jesus taught. What's missing here?

Here's what's missing: SCRIPTURE! They ignore those Scriptures that would tell them how to resolve their differences. But of course those Scriptures point to an institution that was present at the time of the Apostles and is present today, that was given by Jesus and the Holy Spirit infallible power to know what is right and wrong... and well, Protestant leaders just

can't bury their pride to accept WHAT THE BIBLE CLEARLY TEACHES. So they ignore it, and they ignore the Church Christ established, an institution that Jesus said would never fail and would never teach anything wrong. Yes, the Bible says that, clearly.

So, the material you sent claims that "Jesus" is the authority. (Matthew 18) as if Jesus was sitting on a throne here on Earth making decisions. Jesus isn't on an Earthly throne today anymore than God was on the throne at the time of Moses. But Moses was on the throne and telling the people what God was saying. Moses sat in "the chair" and governed the people as God spoke to them through Moses. God has always used earthly people to be his spokesperson here on Earth. There was Noah, Moses, the prophets, Jesus, the Apostles, and the bishops, and today the pope. It all follows a Biblical pattern.

And that pattern is in the material you sent. The first section REGARDING AUTHORITY quotes Romans 13:1 that points to an authority on Earth "which God has established." So where is that authority, Phyllis?

And then Colossians 1:16ff says there are rulers and authorities created by Christ and even mentions the "church" as under Christ's rule. Hello?! Are you paying attention?

Then you quote Titus 2:15. This is a letter by Paul to Titus (a Catholic bishop) and what does Paul say to the bishop Titus "TEACH. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you." PHYLLIS, WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME DOES THAT MEAN? It means that Christ set up a Church, and then appointed bishops like Titus, and then encouraged Paul to tell Titus to act in Christ's stead and be His authority on earth.

But don't be confused, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would protect his bishops from teaching false things. It's a miracle of God that the Catholic Church is still around and going strong in spite of the error in the personal lives of the men that hold positions of leadership. Remember, just as fallible men wrote infallible Scriptures, so fallible men today (who are ordained by the laying on of hands) interpret those Scriptures (through the power of the Holy Spirit) infallibly. But that power and promise has only been handed down through the one church that has never changed a single doctrine through it's 2,000-year history. Why? Because Jesus said it would be so. More on that in a moment...it's in your Bible. Like you say you have to listen to Jesus in the Bible. The whole Catholic thingy is based on that premise.

But let's get back to your material. It's so interesting how it supports Catholic teaching.

In Hebrews 13:17 your material says "OBEY YOUR LEADERS AND SUBMIT TO THEIR AUTHORITY. THEY KEEP WATCH OVER YOU AS MEN WHO MUST GIVE ACCOUNT. OBEY THEM....." Phyllis, why are you not obeying the in-line authority that these verses are telling you to obey?

Here ARE some more Bible verses that your preacher friends obviously ignore for fear that if they took Jesus' words seriously they'd have to become Catholic. Phyllis, if it wasn't for the Catholic Church over the centuries you would know nothing about Christ. It is the Catholic Church that protected the teachings and traditions of Christianity, and gave you the Bible, and decided the great heresies over the centuries, and yet today defends Christians against the skeptics and confronts presidents who would kill babies, et al. The Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed came from the Catholic Church. We recite those creeds every Sunday in Mass, does your church? When you recite the Apostles Creed and you come to "we believe

in the communion of saints" What do you think that means? Does it matter what you think it means, or what the writers of that sentence intended it to mean?

But here...

Try Matthew 18:17ff where Jesus says to the Apostles during instruction on how to deal with a belligerent church member who is sinning: "If he refuses to listen even to the CHURCH, then treat him as you would a Gentile or tax collector." Jesus does not say, if he refuses to listen to ME, Jesus. And there's that nasty word "CHURCH" in that verse. Yes, Jesus established a Church to ride herd on those of us who couldn't tell right from wrong, and then promised that the Church would NEVER make a mistake in its teachings of faith or morals. Notice that there was no promise that the leaders of the church would never make mistakes in their personal lives. (I'm told the pope goes to confession frequently.) Don't confuse the personal behavior of a church leader with the teachings of the church. Certainly the presidency of the United States is different than the behavior of some of our recent presidents.

Okay, you wanted Bible, so let's get back to the Bible. How well do you know it?

Matthew 18:18 Jesus says to the Apostles: "Whatever YOU bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Sounds like Jesus is giving them AUTHORITY, Jesus' authority to make rules about what is right and wrong. Are you obeying Jesus, Phyllis? If you want to, you better be obeying the Church.

Lookie here: Luke 10:16 "those who listens to you listen to me... those who reject you reject me...and the one who sent me." If you are going to listen to Jesus, you better be obeying those he left in charge.

Phyllis, there are dozens of verses like these that put the onus on YOU to obey the CHURCH, because only the Church that Jesus established is infallible enough to INTERPRET what Jesus meant.

Could the Church ever be wrong about what it teaches on faith and morals? Well, DO YOU BELIEVE JESUS? In John 16:13 Jesus says the Holy Spirit will guide the Apostles and their successors into ALL TRUTH. Not some truth. ALL TRUTH. The Church is pronounced by Christ to be infallible. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says that "my church (there's that nasty word again) ... the gates of hell will NOT prevail against it." That is the CHURCH is perpetual, never ending.

So, Phyllis, where is that Church that existed at the time of Christ and Jesus says will never error in its teaching, and will be around until the end of time? Where is that Church? Was your church or denomination around at the time of Christ? How old is it? Can your pastor be traced back, through the laying on of hands, to one of the Apostles? Only Catholics, Orthodox and a few Anglicans do claim that, and frankly I think the Anglicans that could claim that died off.

In John 16:26 Jesus says, "the Holy Spirit...will teach you everything and remind you of all." That dang infallibility thingy. Jesus said this. You wanted to obey only Jesus, well, pay attention. He's talking to you.

And there are many, many more Scripture passages that your preachers ignore. Like Eph 3:10 where it says that the wisdom of God comes through the Church. And 1 Tim 3:14-15 that the Church is the "pillar and foundation of truth" (not the Bible, which didn't exist for several hundred more years).

So, next time TBN airs Common Ground, you would do yourself an eternity of good to pay attention, and not challenge the Holy Spirit like you are currently doing.

In the meantime, find a good priest and get to confession. Jesus said to the first Church leaders, "Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins you do not forgive, they will not be forgiven." (John 20:23) And don't give me this crap about how you won't confess your sins to a man. A priest is the representative of CHRIST. Did you learn absolutely NOTHING as a child growing up in The Catholic Church? Were you sleeping or goofing off the whole time and ignoring the instruction you were given?

Phyllis, do not blame the church for your own lack of attentiveness.

Finally, if I am completely wrong, then the Bible, Jesus and the Apostles and the great saints of old are wrong, and I guess only Phyllis is right. How amazing could that be?

Get to the real Church Phyllis.

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