

I. INTRODUCTION

One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic

Emphasize the logical progression of Apologetics – we move step by step from one truth to the next

The fact that God exists, the fact that He is all good and all perfect, man's duties towards God, how God allows man to fulfill those duties by teaching him through revelation, how we recognize the message that is truly revealed by God as opposed to those that men just make up, how OLJC fulfilled those criteria, how Christ formed a church as the institution which preserves and passes on God's revelation

Now: how we recognize which Church that is

The Marks of the Church are not just some random characteristics of the Catholic Church that we settle on to show how great the Catholic Church is – rather they are the characteristics which the True Religion must have if it is to be the true religion

Will see first why each of these must be attributes of the true religion (whatever religion that may be)

Will then see how the Catholic Church fulfills each of them

II. UNITY

As regards the Mark of Unity – we will start by showing why this must be an essential characteristic of the true religion (whichever religion that may be)

This is an important point: many people today have absolutely no problem with there being multiple “true religions”

We should all forget our differences and just get along – the fundamental problem here is in the very concept of religion, it is something which is unimportant so we should all just agree to treat it as unimportant and focus on the really important things (like world peace)

The problem is that there absolutely cannot be multiple systems of belief and morals which are true – they can all be false, or there can be one of them that is true and the rest are false

How do we know which is the true one – meaning which one comes from God?

Unity of the True Religion

1. Intro

a. Presupposes an understanding of some basic truths

i. Brief summary on unity of truth – Recommend Fr. Wiseman's early podcasts in Crisis in the Church series on foundations of the crisis (Nominalism and Kant)

We can say many things, but only one of them is true (example)

ii. Brief summary of only one God – Recommend Fr. Robinson's podcast on existence of God

If there were multiple first principles then we might be able to posit the possibility of two different systems of belief

Some believe in a sort of dualism: a principle of evil and a principle of good – if that were the case then perhaps there *could* be multiple religions that truly come from the gods... but impossible

iii. Brief summary: God cannot contradict Himself (would entail change)

If God could contradict Himself, then He perhaps might give a certain revelation at a certain time and later give a different one

iv. God cannot deceive

If God were not all-good and all-perfect but sort of sadistic He could make up multiple contradictory religions and then sit back and enjoy the show

But God is all-perfect, He cannot deceive nor be deceived

b. De facto: there are multiple contradictory religions in the world – this fact is usually accepted and deplored as a problem, but why this is a problem is not at all agreed upon

Some reject the idea that the religions are actually contradictory in the first place – they are just different ways of expressing the same truth

Either a person who believes this has a completely different understanding of truth and religion (most likely), or they're fooling themselves

The fact remains: there are multiple religions in the world that contradict each other on essential points (we might disagree about whether or not those points are essential, but everyone knows that there are religions that contradict each other)

c. Recap: What is Religion? What is its purpose?

i. Objective definition of Religion (recommend Fr. Franks' podcast)

Religion: the sum total of theoretical (creed) and practical (cult/code) truths pertaining to God and our relationships to Him

ii. Purpose of Religion

If religion rests on an objective foundation (certain knowledge... either natural or revealed), then the only legitimate religion is the one that teaches the truth about God and our relations with God

A religion is only legitimate if:

- It tells the truth about God and His will. CREED
- It pays homage to God in the way that He wills. CULT
- Practicing it leads men to their ultimate goal. CODE

These things constitute the very purpose of religion, this is why religion exists

Obviously we have to agree on this with our interlocutor – some will say that religion is only to make us feel better, as a sort of salve for psychic or emotional pain (the “opiate of the masses”), a mechanism for exerting a sort of social pressure to ‘be good’ or ‘be kind’

Obviously religion can fulfill all of these goals, but they are not the primary ones, they are rather consequences of the primary

We first have to establish what we mean by religion and its purpose, then we can begin talking about why there can be only one true religion – otherwise we may as well stop talking

2. The true religion must teach the truth about God, pay homage to God in the way He wills, and its practice must lead men to God – we will spend some time on this because the idea is essential, even if it risks being a bit of a repetition

a. Why so essential: teaching the truth about God (CREED)

Religion exists to teach men about God, it preserves God's revelation without which we cannot know much about God (can know a little by our natural reason, but only very little, often mixed with errors)

Revelation is God telling us about Himself – without it we will begin to make up our own ideas about God coming from nowhere but our imaginations

No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18)

If a religion does not preserve the authentic revelation coming from God, it is no better than a human opinion, and those are a dime a dozen

To be worthy of the name, a religion must teach the truth about God, otherwise it is worthless

b. Why so essential: worshipping God in the way He wills (CULT)

We know by reason that God is our Creator – and so there are certain obligations we owe Him

These obligations are the most important, since they deal with our first principle, the One who has given us all

How can we fulfill those most important of all obligations? We can make things up for ourselves, or we can try to find out what He wants (example)

c. Why so essential: must lead men to God (MORAL CODE)

It is obvious that the end of man cannot be this life: He has an immortal element to him, yet he leaves this life; nothing in this life is capable of satisfying him (see STA: will even go so far as to say only the infinite can satisfy man)

But how can we achieve the infinite? It is so far beyond us!

Just as God has provided us with our very existence, He has provided us with a way to fulfill the purpose of that existence – He reveals to us a map to reach that goal (preserved by religion)

3. Essential vs. non-essential differences – Why the True Religion must be ONE

We see a variety of different religions in the world

That which differentiates these religions is their doctrinal/moral content

This content can differ in one of two ways, either essentially or accidentally

Either there are essential differences in what is taught, or there are only accidental (ie: unimportant) ones

- If the differences are only accidental, then the religion is essentially one and only accidentally multiple (ie: they teach the same essential truths about God and how to reach Him, and they differ only in small unimportant matters) – Examples
- If the differences are essential, then only one of the religions can be true – Examples
Either all religions are false, or only one is true (ie: only one actually teaches the truth about God and how to reach Him, the rest fail to do so since they differ on the essentials)
Further, if the religion is supernatural (ie: revealed by God) then it cannot contain essential differences, for in this case God would be contradicting Himself

4. Conclusion: the True Religion, whichever it may be, must be ONE – otherwise we have a contradiction

There can be only one true religion, there can be many false religions, but only one can be true – by its very nature it is exclusive of the rest

Next time will look at how the Catholic Church possesses the mark of unity, and also at the other marks of the Church, why each of them must be characteristics of the true religion, and how the Catholic Church possesses each of them