

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

What is a Mark?

A Mark is a quality which distinguishes something from all other things

To serve as a mark, following conditions must be met:

Easier to recognize than the thing itself

Visible or obvious in some way

We can consider each of these elements as “properties” (essential accidents or characteristics) of the Church, but as “marks” we will consider only the most obvious and clear expression of each property

It is essential to the thing (must never be absent from the thing, and must never exist in anything besides the thing)

When saying that they must never exist in any other thing; when it comes to marks of the true religion, we mean that these marks are essential characteristics of the religion God founded, in other words they are able to come only from the action of God Himself, so they are in the order of moral miracles

We will look at why each of the Marks must be a characteristic of the true religion (whichever that may be), and then at how the Catholic Church fulfills each of them

III. CATHOLICITY

“Catholic” comes from the Greek, “kata” + “(h)olos” meaning “throughout a whole” – means something complete, whole, entire – universal

1. Why the True Religion must be Catholic/Universal

- If the True Religion really comes from God (and to be true we have established that it must);
- If God wants all men to reach Him (based on man’s supernatural purpose, the fact that we exist to reach the infinite, the fact that God is all-good and all-perfect and would not create us with a specific purpose that could never be realized);
- If the True Religion is the only means of reaching God (because it alone teaches the truth about Him and His will);

Then it follows that God must will this religion to be universal, that all men have at least the possibility of accessing it (if not absolutely all then at least morally all)

We call it absolute universality if the true religion actually does extend to all people, and we call it moral universality if it reaches only a great number of people

When we say God wills it, we mean in an efficacious manner – it is not as though God sort of wishes that this is the case and hopes it will one day happen, but that He is really involved in making sure it happens – He supports it with His own almighty power throughout time and space

2. Characteristics of this Universality of the True Religion:

- It must be universal throughout space – what we usually think of when we speak of catholicity, but not the only aspect
- It must be universal throughout time – obviously necessary in order to reach all peoples
- It must be universal as regards all personnel – cannot be exclusive to a certain race, nor to a certain class of people (eg: appeals only to commoners, or only to intelligentsia)
- It must teach all of the doctrine revealed by God – must teach all of what God wants men to know

3. Universality of the Catholic Church – it is the will of God that His Church be universal

- As foretold in the Messianic prophecies
Gen. 22:18 – all of the nations will be blessed in the seed of Abraham, i.e. Christ.
Ps. 2:8 – *“Ask of Me and I will give you the nations for an inheritance...”*

Ps. 71:17 – *“In Him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed...”*

Ps. 85:9 – *“All the nations you have made shall come and worship you, O Lord, and glorify your name.”*

- As commanded by Christ

Mt. 28:19 – *“Go, therefore, teach all nations...”*

Mt. 24:14 – *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come.”*

Lk. 24:46-47 – *“it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, the third day: And that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

Acts 1:8 – *“you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.”*

- De facto this is the case: after a small beginning, the Church has always been conspicuous for its morally universal diffusion throughout the world

When connections began to be made between Europe and the Far East, some of the first to go were missionaries; when the New World was discovered, it was the same

Likewise throughout time – the Catholic Church has outlasted empires and remained always the same

Only needs to be a morally universal diffusion, does not apply to all individuals

St. Augustine: *“All nations were promised, but not all the individual men of all nations.”*

Moral catholicity requires more than simply “great numbers” – it also requires peoples from different nations belonging to the Church at the same time

4. Unity and Catholicity as a Mark – “Catholic-Unity”

As a mark (ie: something which clearly shows the Catholic Church to be the true church, something in the realm of a moral miracle that belongs only to God) – we only speak of the marks of Catholicity and Unity taken together

It is quite remarkable how the Church exists throughout times, places, cultures, nations – and yet remains everywhere and always essentially the same – this is something that goes beyond mere human possibilities, it lies in the realm of the moral miracle

IV. HOLINESS

Holiness consists in union with God, the supreme norm of rectitude (right action) – STA says that holiness consists in a steadfast union with God and a spotless purity

Union with God implies correspondence with the order He created – “rectitude” means living according to this order, living in accordance with what is good

1. Why the True Religion must be Holy

If a religion truly comes from God and truly leads back to Him, we can only expect that it reflects the things of God – God is holy, and so His religion must be holy as well

If we see something in a particular religion which is evil, weird, debasing, shameful – obviously it cannot come from God (this refers to the teaching of the religion itself, not some members who misbehave, we are all human and to be human is to be a sinner)

Eg: human sacrifice, immorality, cruelty – if the religion itself promotes such things, it cannot come from God

2. Holiness of the Catholic Church

Catholic Church is holy in her means of sanctification, in her members, and in her charisms

a. Means of sanctification: the Church possess means that are adequate for producing ordinary holiness in people, and even heroic holiness

“He gave Himself for us, to redeem us from every kind of iniquity and cleanse a people for His very own, zealous of good deeds.” (Titus 2.14)

“Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it... That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:25-27)

If Christ willed that people be guided even to outstanding holiness by His Church, He certainly must have endowed Her with the effective means for producing this holiness

Can also consider the means themselves offered by the Church – Her doctrine, Her moral standards
It is not an exaggeration to say that the teachings of the Catholic Church represent the highest standards of nobility and natural virtue – She upholds self-sacrifice to a heroic degree, the exercise of charity; even the less spectacular virtues such as humility, modesty, simplicity

It is not without reason that people are scandalized when they see moral depravity in the clergy, or that the Church’s enemies so gleefully publicize this when it is discovered – this is because deep down everyone recognizes that the Church gives *the* moral standard for the world at large

Everyone recognizes that Her clergy and Her members *ought* to be holy

b. Holiness in Her members:

Christ founded the Church to sanctify men, even to the level of heroic sanctity:

I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt 5:48)

So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:16)

History tells us that there has never been a lack of some who exercise heroic virtue in the Church
This does not mean that *all* Her members be holy

Exercise of virtue to a heroic degree is strictly speaking a moral miracle involving special assistance from God – miracles are by definition out of the ordinary

Even when we speak of ordinary holiness, it is not necessary that all members of the Church actually be holy – Christ forewarned that there would be sinners in His kingdom

Accordingly we can say: if there are sinners in the Church, they are sinners because they neglect the means provided by the Church; if there are saints in the Church, they are such because of the means given to the Church by Her Founder

c. Holiness in Her charisms:

These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues.

They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

The promise of these extraordinary events is primarily given to the Apostolic age, but it is not limited to them – however Christ says nothing about the measure in which it is fulfilled, therefore it will vary from age to age

Again these things are in the realm of miracles, so by definition they are extraordinary

Yet once again they have not been lacking throughout history

3. Holiness as a Mark

As a mark we take only what is most visible or obvious – in the case of holiness this will refer only to the heroic holiness of the Church’s members, since only this exists in every age and is clear enough to be established as a moral miracle

V. APOSTOLICITY

Apostolicity means having to do with or coming from Apostles, in this context it means that the mission conferred by God on those men who would teach His religion must be passed on by an unbroken line of successors – basically this means that there is some historical link between this religion and God Himself

1. Why the True Religion must be apostolic

If God revealed to men the unique means by which they will attain their last end and reach Him, and if He desires all men to know of this revelation, one of several things would have to happen:

- Either God Himself would have to reveal His religion directly to each individual man
 - Internally, in the depths of each individual's soul: Regardless of what some may claim, we know this cannot be the case since *de facto* there are many who have claimed to receive this personal revelation, and yet all of their “revelations” contain essential contradictions with one another – therefore they cannot come from God
 - Externally in a public fashion: *de facto* this is not the case since God no longer visibly walks the earth
- Or God would have to reveal His religion directly to a few men, and using them as intermediaries, reveal it indirectly to the rest of men
 - He would have to confer upon some the power and duty of passing on His teaching
 - These in turn must either live long enough to teach all men, or they must have successors in this same power, and their successors must be able to be traced by unbroken line back to those original few who were directly taught by God Himself

2. Apostolicity of the Catholic Church

We distinguish three kinds of apostolicity which must be possessed by the Church:

- a. Apostolicity of Doctrine: this means the Church must always teach the same doctrine as that taught by the original few who received it from God Himself
This doctrine could be made more explicit over time, but it could never be added to or subtracted from in such a way as to change the essential message given by God to men, otherwise the Church would have failed
- b. Apostolicity of Government: this means that the Church must always be ruled by those who are the legitimate successors of those whom God originally empowered to rule and direct men to eternal life
Since the original men are no longer living, God must have given them this power as juridical persons – they did not receive it only as individuals but also as dignitaries with a specific function, and their successors share the same power insofar as they exercise the same function
God gave the powers of teaching, sanctifying, and governing on the moral level only to a few, and those who possess them today must be able to trace their official lineage back to those few
- c. Apostolicity of Membership: this means that the membership of the Church must have suffered no break – in other words the Church must be numerically the same society as that founded by the initial few
Eg: if a nation completely disappeared and then was re-founded on the same principles, it would still be a numerically different nation than the original one – perhaps one of the same kind, but still a different one

3. Apostolicity as a Mark

Again, as a mark we consider only the clearest and most obvious – the mark of apostolicity is going to assume that the True Religion has already been identified using the other marks

Once identified, apostolicity kicks in by examining which of the churches we have today matches (in doctrine, government, and membership) the original one started by God

This is primarily a historical question: we answer it by looking at the continuity of doctrine found in the Church Fathers, and also the continuity in the offices of the papacy and episcopacy