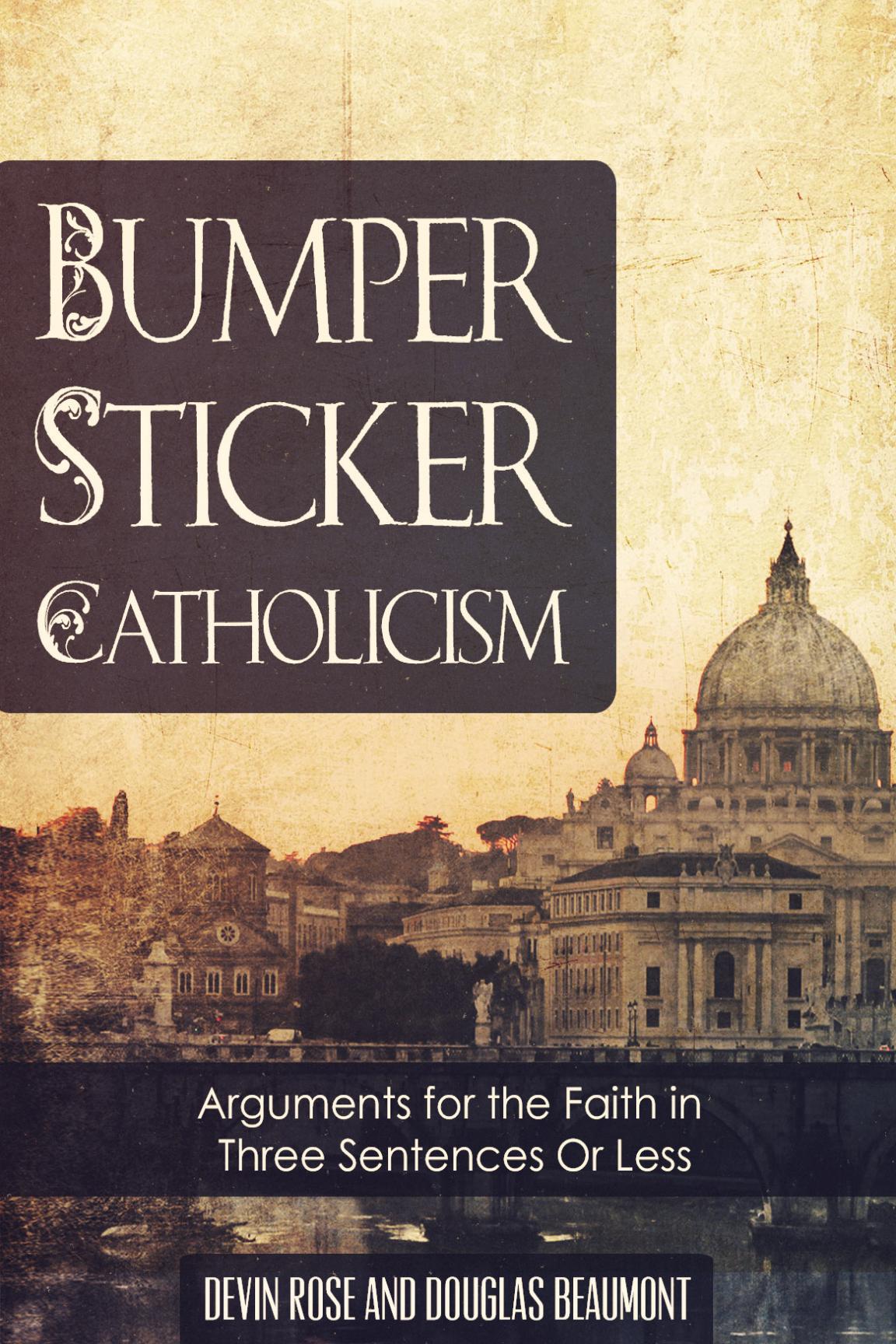


BUMPER STICKER CATHOLICISM



Arguments for the Faith in
Three Sentences Or Less

DEVIN ROSE AND DOUGLAS BEAUMONT

Bumper Sticker Catholicism

Arguments for the Faith in Three Sentences Or Less

Devin Rose and Douglas Beaumont

This book is for sale at
<http://leanpub.com/bumperstickercatholicism>

This version was published on 2017-10-06



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Powerful Questions

Protestants claim the Church got corrupted or went full apostate in the first few centuries. But a good question to ask them is “*When, exactly, the Church went off the rails?*” What event was it, in what year, or even decade, and how do they know that that was the time it happened? If their answer is any time before the 4th Century, they give up trust in the canon, the Nicene creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon (all standards of orthodoxy that the Church was responsible for). If they answer later than the 4th Century, you can ask why God only protected the Church up until then.

Sometimes you can catch a Protestant friend off guard by asking them bluntly: “*Why aren’t you Catholic?*” I’ve found it’s best to ask that to friends who have shown at least some warming up to Catholicism. It can lead to surprisingly candid answers that spurs further discussion.

To stimulate dialogue, ask: “*If you lived in the first century, would you have submitted to the Apostles? What about to their successors (e.g. Timothy, Titus)?*” This question draws out the absurdity of *sola Scriptura*, since it forces them to decide whether they would follow their own interpretation of Scripture even over the Apostles who wrote it!

“*If you lived during the time of the Apostles, would you have confessed your sins to them as Jesus said in John 20:23?*” The Protestant’s dilemma here is that if he answers “Yes,” then he admits that he would have confessed his sins to a man, something Protestants reject. But if he says, “No,” then he contradicts Christ’s words that the Apostles were given this authority by God.

Tradition

Catholics follow tradition, which the Bible condemns? Wrong, we follow the Tradition established by the Apostles: “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thess. 2:15).

Jewish Tradition was not binding, only what was written in the Old Testament? Jesus said: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice” (Matt. 23:2–3). Only problem is: the Old Testament never mentions “Moses’ seat”, it was part of (binding) Jewish Tradition!

The English Protestants banned Christmas and fig pudding. They said it was not in the Bible to celebrate Christmas on December 25th. They’re right—it is Catholic Tradition—so why are you celebrating Christmas on December 25th?

Every important thing the Apostles wanted to say was written down in the New Testament? “I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink; I hope to see you soon, and we will talk together face to face” (3 John 13–14). St. John laid the smack down on Diotrephes for challenging his authority and did so in person, penning the short letter captured in 3 John just to let them know he was coming!

The Nicene Creed says there is “one baptism for the forgiveness of sin.” This means that baptism regenerates you, a doctrine universally taught in the early Church. But Protestants have changed the meaning of this phrase to be: “one symbolic baptism of being forgiven of your sins when you had a conversion experience and accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior.”

The Church cannot change in her essentials but can and does grow,

develop, and adapt: Pope St. John Paul II added a fourth set of mysteries to the Rosary; Pope Benedict XVI created the Anglican Ordinariate to allow Anglicans to become Catholic while retaining much of their patrimony; God has called various men and women to different forms of religious life, from hermits in caves to the Rule of St. Benedict to the mendicant orders and beyond. Within the unity of the truth, tremendous opportunities exist for authentic diversity.

If one denies God's protection of the truth from error, the possibility of handed-down divine revelation is completely lost. Instead of being able to look to the living Church as the authority to be trusted, one must choose which members of the academy to follow, and hope that the chosen scholars are trustworthy.

The Liturgy (the Mass, Divine Liturgy) is strikingly similar across all the ancient Churches: Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox. But the New Testament never gives a detailed description of what it should look like; so either the Liturgy sprang up as a man-made tradition across the entire world in the 200s, or it was an Apostolic Tradition.

Across all ancient Churches are the universal beliefs in Apostolic Succession, veneration of Mary and the saints, seven sacraments, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and many other doctrines that Protestants think Catholics "invented" in the Middle Ages. Not at all, as the Coptic Church broke in schism in the 400s, and yet also believes all these things.

Regarding purgatory, even when sins are forgiven, temporal punishment remains. To understand why, think of a situation where a man clubs his neighbor over the head and steals his money; later, he repents and asks the neighbor for forgiveness, and the neighbor forgives him. But though he is forgiven it is still necessary that he 1) repay the money, 2) pay for any medical bills, and 3) possibly go to jail for the attack.

Always encourage Protestants to read the Church Fathers. For every one passage that sounds like it may possibly be Protestant, one

hundred more are completely incompatible with Protestantism. The one passage that sounds possibly Protestant, when read in context and with the Father's other statements, will be seen to be Catholic as well!

Faith And Reason

Faith is not unquestioning belief in something that has no evidence to support it. That is fideism. The dogmas of the Catholic Faith, it is true, cannot be proven by reason alone, or they would not be truths that God needed to reveal, but every dogma has historical and biblical evidence supporting it, which give motives of credibility to believe it is true.

Reflecting back on my (Devin's) double conversion (from atheism to Protestantism to Catholicism), I now realize that I came to faith in Jesus Christ outside of full communion with the Catholic Church, which was only possible because God is so gracious that even schisms cannot thwart His desire for all men to come to know Him in truth. Only after prayer and study did I come to realize that there were flaws in the reasoning supporting my Protestant beliefs. I knew that God would not require me to believe something that contradicted reason.

God gave us a great gift in His Church by making it both beautifully faithful as well as eminently reasonable. If either piece were missing, it would be immeasurably more difficult to discover her. But God in His wisdom has shown us that just as grace builds upon nature, so faith builds upon reason and does not eradicate it or make it unnecessary.

Catholics point out how these cannot actually give them their certainty needed to believe their canon is correct, but when faced with these rebuttals, instead of realizing that they have a fundamental problem, one that strikes at the root of their beliefs, they claim that that hole in their reason is where "faith" comes in. You see, "faith" fills in the gaps left by Protestantism's ad hoc judgments.

Sound reasoning allows one to make the assent of faith seamlessly, as a hang glider gets a running take off from a tall ledge. Faulty

reasoning is akin to that hang glider stumbling over rough stones, not getting the momentum needed for a proper take off, and then relying on Faith of the gaps to somehow correct that problem and get him into flight. He may get into some sort of flight in a partial or wobbly way (analogous to, say, a canon missing 7 books that God inspired), but it won't send him soaring to the highest heights he was created for.

Because Protestants reject the Catholic belief that Christ founded a visible Church and has protected His Church from error in her teachings, they are forced to fill in the holes, inconsistencies, and discontinuities in their beliefs with 'faith,' yet doing so is really (unintentionally) being fideistic and not the true use of faith.