

ARE CATHOLICS BIBLICAL CHRISTIANS?

The catholic faith is a living faith that traces its history back to the witnessing of the apostles and the communities they formed. Catholics recognise the Bible to be the authentic written expression of the faith of the early Church. We also believe that the Holy Spirit guides the church so that it interprets the biblical revelation without error.

The Church in her teaching will guide us in our understanding of the true meaning of Scripture. We are biblical Christians in the sense that we reverence Scripture as inspired by God. But we do not treat Scripture as a document that is extra-ecclesial i.e. outside the church. The bible is a child of the Catholic Church. It was the Catholic Church under the leadership of the Pope which decided which books of the bible were inspired and which were not. It was the Catholic Church which gave us the "canon" of scripture. That "canon" was decided by the Pope at the end of the fourth century.

We believe Christ' priority was first and foremost to form a community of believers under the leadership of the apostles but more especially under the authority Peter and His successors i.e. a Church. He never asked that there be a written record of his life and ministry. It was the Church which decided, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to commit the Word of God to writing and faithfully interpret it.

The Catholic Church has never taught anything which is contrary to scripture. Some teachings are not immediately apparent but all of its teachings are implicit in the inspired Word of God. There are many disputed moral questions which the Bible says nothing explicitly about, for example, surrogate motherhood, contraception, invitro fertilization etc. That is why we need the Church and its *Magisterium* under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to faithfully interpret the Word of God.

QUESTIONS

1. *Jesus never asked anyone to write a gospel about him, signing it before he ascended into Heaven. He probably knew, like some Christians mistakenly do ("the bible says this and the bible says that") that we would start worshipping the book instead of God. God inspired the authors in their task of writing. Incidentally, the Muslims believe that God held the pen of the prophet Mohammed when he was writing the Koran. If Christians believe the same about the bible they become easy meat for the 'fundamentalists'. Interpreting any scriptures, be they Bible or Koran in a literal way is very dangerous! Discuss*

2. *The church and the bible are two sides of the same coin – you cannot have one without the other. We call the Church's role in interpreting the bible "TRADITION". This tradition which includes the teaching authority of the church helps apply scriptural insight and answers to the moral and religious questions of each generation, including ours. Like the Bible the church's tradition is also guided by the Holy Spirit. Discuss*

3. *Most scholars today, (not just Catholics), would say that the Bible is a Catholic book – a product of the Catholic Church. Some of our separated brothers and sisters would have us believe that the Bible was invented at the Reformation! Discuss.*