

## **Adult Catechism Class December 14, 2015**

### *How to defend the Catholic faith against Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Other Non-Catholic Denominations*

#### **Part 1: Scripture Readings:**

**1 Peter 3:15:** But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.

**Titus 1:9:** He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

**Matthew 5:11-12:** Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

#### **Part 2: Who are the Jehovah Witnesses?**

*The Jehovah's Witnesses* were founded in 1872 by Charles Taze Russell. He came from a Protestant background (Congregationalism), and many Jehovah beliefs are Protestant. The group claims a worldwide membership of more than 8.2 million adherents involved in evangelism, convention attendance figures of more than 15 million, and an annual Memorial attendance of more than 19.9 million. The Jehovah's reject the Eucharist, purgatory, confession, and the intercession of the Saints. The Jehovah's practice *Adventism*, which was a religious movement in the 1800s which was preoccupied with the date of the Second Coming. They claimed to know the exact date of the Second Coming, as did the founders of the Mormon and Seventh Day Adventist faiths. They all denied that the Holy Spirit is a person. Jehovah's teach that Michael the Archangel was actually Jesus, the Second Adam. They believe that the human soul disappears after death until the Second Coming. Jehovah's claim that the Early Church did not believe that Jesus was actually God and Jehovah's believe that Jesus is only a man. Jehovah's have deliberately mistranslated many parts of the Bible to fit their own doctrines. For example, they call Jesus divine, but only in the sense that He is a holy person, not God. They try to prove Jesus was not God by saying He did not have perfect knowledge (He did not tell the Apostles the exact date for the end of the world, and he made Himself subordinate to God the Father). However, we must remember that Jesus had both a Divine Nature and a Human Nature. He mostly spoke to the Apostles through His humanity, but did show them a glimpse of His Divinity by saying in John 10:30 that "He and the Father are one", and in John 14:9 saying that "He who has seen me has seen the Father". He also made the statement in John 14:6 that "I am the way and the truth and the life". Only God can say I Am the truth because only God is Truth itself.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that only 144,000 people will go to heaven. This group is called the "Anointed." All other people who are righteous before God will inherit an everlasting earthly paradise. The group of the 144,000 began with the Apostles and was completed by the year 1935. No one currently living can go to heaven, we can only hope for paradise on earth. Jehovah's also believe that Old Testament Saints could not enter heaven but can only dwell in earthly paradise. They base their belief on the 144,000 from Revelation 7: 1-8 and Revelation 14: 1-5. However, if we take these passages literally, it only talks about celibate Jewish males who are still on earth, 12000 men from each of the 12 tribes of Israel! The book of Revelation is symbolic and should never be read in a literal sense. Later on in Revelation is a passage that tells of a great crowd in heaven besides the 144,000. As Catholics, we believe that all the followers of Christ are given the hope of heaven, without limited numbers. Jehovah's disregard that Jesus tells us in Luke 13:28 that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the other Old Testament prophets are already in the kingdom of God. Our infinitely generous heavenly Father wants far more than 144,000 people in heaven!!

Jehovah's also refuse to accept blood transfusions. They base their belief on Genesis 9:3-4, Leviticus 17:14 and Acts 15:28-29. Although the Mosaic law did prohibit the eating of blood, it says nothing about blood transfusions, which of course did not exist at that time! And Acts 15 only dealt with the Council of Jerusalem, and does not apply to us today. Dietary laws found in the Scriptures are only regulations that could be modified or even discarded as conditions changed. Jehovah Witnesses used to forbid vaccinations and organ transplants, but not they allow both, so some day they may lift their restrictions on blood transfusions as well. Jehovah's have changed their doctrines over the years such as their prediction that some people alive in 1914 would see the end of the world. This is to avoid embarrassment to their leaders who made these predictions.

Jehovah's hold that man is a soul, so when a person dies, the soul is annihilated, he ceases to exist altogether, but at the end of the world the whole person will be created again from nothing. However, Catholics believe that the soul is immortal and survives the death of the body. In Matthew 10:28, Jesus tells us not to fear those who can only kill the body, but not the soul. This is clear proof that there is a distinction between the mortal body and the immortal soul. Jehovah's also reject the doctrine that hell is eternal. They believe that at the end of time, all the wicked humans and devils will be annihilated, they will cease to exist. But this contradicts the Catholic belief that the soul is immortal and will last forever. Many verses in the New Testament talk about "everlasting fire" or a fire "that cannot be put out" such as Matthew 3:12, Mark 9:43, and Matthew 18:8. Everlasting means continuing forever. Jesus has made it very clear that there will be an everlasting reward for the righteous and an everlasting punishment of the wicked.

### **Part 3: Who are the Mormons?**

The Mormon Church was founded by Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1830. Its official name is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith claimed he established the Mormon church

based on revelations he received in 1820, from two persons who came from heaven. They told him that all Christian religions in existence were totally corrupt. His mission was to restore the true religion that had been established by Jesus Christ, but had become completely corrupt after the death of the last Apostle. Joseph Smith claimed that God had made him both a prophet and an Apostle. God made him and inspired prophet who could communicate Divine revelation and write Sacred Scripture. Mormons consider three books to be a part of Scripture besides the Bible: Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price. Mormons believe that all Mormon church presidents since Joseph Smith are also inspired prophets from God. Joseph Smith also came from a Protestant background, so he also rejected the Eucharist, the Papacy, the Marian doctrines, and the seven deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament. Joseph Smith was also caught up in the fervor of the Adventist movement, even predicting the world would end in 1890. Joseph Smith was also a Freemason, entering the Masons in 1842. Many of the Mormon rituals are similar to the rituals of the Masonic order. Joseph Smith may have borrowed ideas from the Colonial Ministers Cotton Mather, William Penn, and Roger Williams, who all speculated that the American Indians might be remnants of the lost tribe of Israel. This formed the Mormon idea that Palestinian Jews migrated to the Americas centuries before Jesus was on this earth. Due to their high birth and conversion rates, the Mormon population has grown significantly in recent decades rising from around 3 million in 1970 to over 15 million in 2014.

Smith taught that Jews came to the New World in 600 BC, and established the nations of the Nephites and the Lamanites. But archaeologists have not found any proof that these nations existed as the Mormons believe is true, causing great embarrassment to the Mormon leaders. Mormons believe in four inspired works, the Bible (King James Version) and the three books written by Joseph Smith. Mormons believe in a "spirit prison", but this is very different than the Catholic belief of Purgatory.

Mormons call the great corruption of the Catholic church after the death of the Apostles the "Great Apostasy". They believe Christ's Church completely disappeared from the earth until it was restored by Joseph Smith in 1829. However, in Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus tells Peter that "he is the rock upon which the church will be built, and not even the gates of hell will prevail against it". Mormons totally disregard this scripture reference. Scripture is very clear that the Catholic Church has not been and can never be corrupted in her Apostolic authority and teaching. The Mormons are also inconsistent by accepting the Canon of the New Testament, which was determined by the Catholic church in the year 400, during the time of the so called Great Apostasy! Mormons have an anti-Catholic book called the Great Apostasy written by James Talmage in 1909. Talmage uses the writings of unscholarly and biased historians to support his own anti-Catholic bias. He tries to prove that the Catholic church became totally corrupted between 100 and 200 AD. But Talmage refused to quote the Early Church Fathers who lived during that time period, especially of how they refuted heresies, divisions and controversies and preserved the true Apostolic doctrines. He refused to mention them because they were all Catholic and did not support his claim of the "Great Apostasy" in the Early Church.

Mormons believe that their Church continues to have Prophets who can communicate divine revelation and reveal new doctrines. However, Catholics believe that the entire faith has already been communicated to us through Jesus Christ, who said in Matthew 28:18-20: "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you." No Catholic Church Father has ever taught that new doctrines inspired Revelations from God were possible after the death of the last Apostle. Many major Mormon doctrines like polygamy and the exclusion of Blacks from the priesthood have been abandoned by the Mormon Church.

Mormonism teaches that there are many gods, who were once mortals, but became gods through the process of "exaltation", faithfully keeping the Mormon ordinances in this life. However, Scripture is very clear that there is only one God! Exodus 20:2-3 makes this quite clear when it says: "I am the Lord thy God. . .Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The Mormon Church also practices Baptism for the dead. Mormons devote a great deal of time and energy baptizing qualified members on behalf of people who died without baptism. They compile extensive genealogical records to identify people needing baptism for the dead. This is only for those who did not have the opportunity to enter the Mormon Church while on earth but does not apply to those who knew about the Mormon teachings but refused to accept them. This allows people who are dead to enter the Mormon church after death and so to enter heaven. They base this on 1 Corinthians 15:29. However, numerous Bible passages clearly tell us that you leave this world either saved or damned such as Hebrews 9:27 and 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Mormons believe in Celestial Marriages. This view is based on the Mormon doctrine of the afterlife, where all people will end up in one of three places: Telestial Kingdom for nonbelievers, Terrestrial Kingdom for good non-Mormons and lukewarm Mormons, and Celestial Kingdom (heaven) for righteous Mormons only. For Mormons, even wicked people, after a temporary hell, end up in the lowest earthly paradise, the Telestial Kingdom. The Celestial kingdom is basically the same as the Christian concept of heaven, but has three degrees of glory. Only those Mormons who enter the first or highest degree of glory in the Celestial Kingdom can become gods. They can do this by receiving Mormon baptism, devoutly following all Mormon teachings, be married (so this eliminates Jesus and St. Paul!), and must have your marriage sealed for "time and eternity" in a Mormon temple. If you meet these conditions, you will be exalted as a god, your marriage will continue forever, and you will forever beget spiritual children who will one day take on a human body. You become god of your own world, and your spirit children will worship you just as you worship God the Father. They draw this teaching from 1 Corinthians 15: 40-42. However, in this passage, St Paul is teaching that the resurrected body is superior to the mortal body. In Catholic understanding, there is no marriage in heaven at all (see Matthew 22: 23-33). Mormons see heaven merely as a more perfect continuation of earthly life, which will include marriage, spiritual sex, and child-bearing. However, to Catholics, the essence of heaven is seeing God as He is, face to face (the Beatific vision).

#### **Part 4: Who are the Seventh Day Adventists?**

The Seventh-day Adventist church traces its roots to American preacher William Miller (1782–1849), a Baptist who predicted the Second Coming would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. Because he and his followers proclaimed Christ's imminent advent, they were known as "Adventists." When Christ failed to appear, Miller reluctantly endorsed the position of a group of his followers known as the "seventh-month movement," who claimed Christ would return on October 22, 1844 (in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar). When this didn't happen either, Miller forswore predicting the date of the Second Coming, and his followers broke up into a number of competing factions. Miller would have nothing to do with the new theories his followers produced, including ones which attempted to save part of his 1844 doctrine. He rejected this and other teachings being generated by his former followers, including those of Ellen Gould White.

Miller had claimed, based on his interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, that Christ would return in 1843–44 to cleanse "the sanctuary" (Dan. 8:11–14, 9:26), which he interpreted as the earth. After the disappointments of 1844, several of his followers proposed an alternative theory. While walking in a cornfield on the morning of October 23, 1844, the day after Christ failed to return, Hiram Edson felt he received a spiritual revelation that indicated that Miller had misidentified the sanctuary. It was not the earth, but the Holy of Holies in God's heavenly temple. Instead of coming out of the heavenly temple to cleanse the sanctuary of the earth, in 1844 Christ, for the first time, went into the heavenly Holy of Holies to cleanse it instead. Another group of Millerites was influenced by Joseph Bates, a retired sea captain, who in 1846 and 1849 issued pamphlets insisting that Christians observe the Jewish Sabbath—Saturday—instead of worshipping on Sunday. This helped feed the intense anti-Catholicism of Seventh-day Adventism, since they blamed the Catholic Church for changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. These two streams of thought—Christ entering the heavenly sanctuary and the need to keep the Jewish Sabbath—were combined by White, who claimed to have received many visions confirming these doctrines. Together with Edson and Bates, she formed the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, which officially received its name in 1860. Today the denomination reports that it has 780,000 members in the United States and 7.8 million members elsewhere, many in Catholic countries.

White claimed to receive the first of several hundred visions in December of 1844. She gained recognition in Adventist circles as a prophetess and became the church's leader. Over the next few decades, she provided guidance on almost every aspect of belief and worship, writing over fifty books commenting on health, education, finance, and other topics. Her works are held by her followers to be inerrant on matters of doctrine, as is the Bible, though they are on a slightly lower plane of honor than the Bible. Her most important books, especially *The Desire of the Ages* and *The Great Controversy*, are frequently reprinted by Seventh-day Adventist publishing houses in a variety of formats. They often appear with different covers and titles.

Seventh-day Adventists agree with many Catholic doctrines, including the Trinity, Christ's divinity, the virgin birth, the atonement, a physical resurrection of the dead, and Christ's

Second Coming. They use a valid form of baptism. They believe in original sin and reject the Evangelical teaching that one can never lose one's salvation no matter what one does (i.e., they correctly reject "once saved, always saved"). Unfortunately, they also hold many false and strange doctrines. Among these are the following: (a) the Catholic Church is the Whore of Babylon; (b) the pope is the Antichrist; (c) in the last days, Sunday worship will be "the mark of the beast"; (d) there is a future millennium in which the devil will roam the earth while Christians are with Christ in heaven; (e) the soul sleeps between death and resurrection; and (f) on the last day, after a limited period of punishment in hell, the wicked will be annihilated and cease to exist rather than be eternally damned. Many Adventists insist that, as a matter of discipline (not doctrine), one must not eat meats considered unclean under the Mosaic Law (many endorse total vegetarianism), and one must avoid "worldly entertainments" (card-playing, dancing, smoking, drinking, reading non-religious books, listening to non-religious music, watching non-religious television, going to the movies, etc.). Adventists also subscribe to the two Protestant shibboleths, sola scriptura (the Bible is the sole rule of faith) and sola fide (justification is by faith alone). As is clear from some of the beliefs listed above, Adventist theology is intensely anti-Catholic. Many Catholics who do not frequently come in contact with Adventists or their literature do not realize just how hostile they can be toward the Church. Trying to give others the benefit of the doubt, Catholics may suppose that anti-Catholicism is part of Adventism's radical fringe. Unfortunately, this is untrue. Adventists who are moderate on Catholicism are a minority. Anti-Catholicism characterizes the denomination because it is embraced in White's "divinely inspired" writings. Seventh-day Adventism is basically consumed with the concept of the last days. It was formed from the remnants of the Millerite movement, which was created to await the world's end. In White's end times view, the Jewish Sabbath and the Catholic Church play prominent roles. According to her, the papacy is the seven-headed beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1–10. Accompanying this beast is a lamb-like beast from the earth (Rev. 13:11–18). The latter causes the world to worship the former and has an image made of it. White proclaimed that the second beast is the United States (The Great Controversy, 387–8), and that it will force people to worship the papacy by "enforcing some observance which shall be an act of homage to the papacy" (ibid., 389). This observance, she says, is Sunday worship rather than Saturday worship. White claims that the papacy changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, making this change a mark of its authority. In her view, there will come a time when the United States will establish a "national Sunday law" and compel its citizens to worship on Sunday and thus take the mark of the beast. It will not compel them to become Catholics, but to join a Protestant state-church that is an "image" of the papacy, and thus, "the image of the beast" (ibid., 382–96). By virtue of their valid baptism, and their belief in Christ's divinity and in the doctrine of the Trinity, Seventh-day Adventists are both ontologically and theologically Christians. But Christians, once separated from the Church our Lord founded, are susceptible to being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).