

The E-mail Exchange

Wow – I’m really impressed. When I first put up this website, I never thought that a radio talk show host, and a well known Catholic apologist and author, would ever consider posting anything I had to say on his website, but I was wrong. John Martignoni has indeed (as of this writing) posted an email exchange I’ve had with him over the past few weeks. I’m flattered John – and thanks for bringing so much attention to my website – I appreciate it.

I’m also a little surprised. I asked Mr. Martignoni early on if it was okay with him if I posted our email exchange on my site – martignonirevealed.com. I felt giving him the courtesy to ask before posting was appropriate, but apparently he didn’t feel the same way, and has posted some of our dialog on his site without notifying me. Maybe this is his effort to try and put me off balance, and is just another way to deflect from the real issues. I found out about his posting when my inbox became flooded with angry email from his dedicated students who apparently hold some of the same feelings Mr. Martignoni does toward those who disagree with him. I can assure these folks that it wasn’t my intention to stir up any bad feelings, and I’m sorry if some of you got angry, but truth is truth, and it often stirs up emotions. Anyway – that’s okay. I welcome the dialog, and I’ll do what I can to respond, but be aware that I don’t have the resources Martignoni does, so it may be a long while before some of you get comments back.

John has apparently been disturbed by my comments, and has taken the step (according to his website) to stop the writing of his book to address some of my points. Again, very flattering, but hardly necessary. This isn’t about email messages that John can post in snippets to his advantage. This is the same tactic he used against Dr. Mizzi and others, and frankly, it’s a little annoying. It’s annoying because John knows better. He has a platform, and on that platform John can cut, past, inject, and generally mold any type of argument he wants to. He takes the opportunity to use his position in an unorthodox way – arguing through emails. Well, we all have our crosses to bear.

Given that – I’ve decided to play on his turf for a bit. Yes, I’m going to assume that posting his comments falls under the “turnabout is fair play” banner, and respond to some of his points. Because my site is more about John’s apologetics and not his theology, I’ll focus on the methods and tactics he uses to convince you he’s right. While there is theological discussion, most of this article is dedicated to his methods, rather than his madness. The following exchange is very exciting, because it gives me a very good opportunity to show how Martignoni uses various techniques and strategies in an attempt to discredit me, not necessarily to make a real case.

John Writes:

"I find your assertion that, "Jesus didn't call us to follow His Church, but to follow Him," quite an incredible assertion. &# 160;What is Jesus' Church, according to the Word of God? Is it not the Body of Christ? And in the Acts of the Apostles, does not Jesus very clearly identify Himself with the Church when it says that Saul persecuted the Church and later Jesus says to Saul, "Why do you persecute Me?" In other words, you are in essence saying that Jesus did not call us to follow His Body, but to follow Him. Is the Church the Body of Christ or not? Why would Jesus found a Church if He did not mean for us to follow it? With all due respect, but your reasoning leaves a lot to be desired."

John uses one of my comments out of context. I’m saying that nowhere in the Bible do we find Jesus telling anyone to follow His church. We see Jesus telling the apostles to follow Him, and we see Jesus telling Peter to feed His sheep (this is the true mission of the church, to feed, not to be followed), but where does Jesus tell us to follow His church? Jesus understood that the church’s relationship to Him was one of a “bride”, and that He is the groom. Just as a wife follows her husband, we as the bride are to follow Jesus. Jesus existed in heaven as the Word, became incarnate, lived as a man, died as a man, and rose again, all before the creation of the church. He told the apostles to follow Him before he established His church. He is distinct from it. We are not

to follow the church, but to become part of it – and together as a corporate body we all follow Christ together. The church is equated to a flock of sheep in the Scriptures, but what sheep follows the flock to the exclusion of the Sheppard? This is fundamental. It's true that Jesus identifies Himself to Saul, as John points out, and makes a correlation to Himself and the body, however, this in no way implies that we are to follow the church the way Martignoni insists we do, but rather that Jesus took it personally when Saul was persecuting the church. Jesus equates it to attacking Him, because we are his family. Just as husband and wife are one, so are Jesus and the body of the church one – not physically - spiritually. Martignoni and his wife are one in marriage, but do any of John's students listen to John's wife, or follow her? Does Martignoni make the claim that he and his wife are the same person? No, he doesn't, and he won't because he can see the distinction, as most people can. The Bible is clear on the "groom / bride" relationship that Christ has with the church – it's Martignoni who's confused.

John writes:

"Notice, though, that he says, "What I'm going to say may seem harsh." Well, by his own words then, that must mean he's angry, right? I mean, he is essentially saying the same thing I said in my talk. He realizes the possibility of someone seeing his words as being harsh. When I say it, it makes me an "angry" person. Of course, when he says it, I'm sure it simply means he is a kind, loving, sensitive and reasonable person. I point all of this out, to show you that the double standards - in logic, in scriptural interpretation, and so on - many people use when it comes to a discussion about the Catholic Faith, can be applied to you personally as well. But, remember, simply look at it as an opportunity. Don't get "angry" like I do."

John's doing a few things here, all of which are disingenuous. First, he reconstructs my comments to lead you on a different track – sort of a loosely knit rabbit trail. He tries to say I'm angry (nonsense), and then he tries to make the claim that I'm like him. Wow – not sure how he got there. I simply took the time to let him know that, my comments might easily offend him if taken wrong. He's shown himself sensitive in the past, so I thought it was a nice gesture. Apparently it bothered John – I just can't win. The real question is - why go off on that? What good does it do to create an issue where none exists? There is no "double-standard in logic" as he claims, but there is a fear in his writing. Apparently he feels threatened by my well-meaning comment. He creates a straw man by suggesting a position that isn't there, and then proceeds to tear it down. My reference to his anger was not given because he at one point claimed his comments might seem harsh as he suggests, but to merely touch on what he'd already admitted - that he was angered years ago by a Protestant radio station in his area, and he felt called to start his ministry. He also admitted he was alerted to his angry tone against Protestants by someone else, so I'm not the only one that's noticed it.

John Writes:

"Lastly, notice that he mentions that I harbor that sentiment, anger, in my heart. Yet, he will say below that he is not judging me. He even mentions that "judging" someone is referring to judging their "heart condition" - which is exactly what he did - yet he maintains he is not judging me. This guy is going to be good, folks."

I'm going to give you for the first time – an inside track on what Martignoni is doing here (and elsewhere in his post), so that you can read his comments after this in a different light and possibly get something out of them. One of the common themes we see time and again in this fallen world is the "you judged me" strategy. It's commonly seen most often from non-believers, atheists, and now John. It comes from those who really have no answer for a challenge, but who want to turn the tables on the other person and deflect an uncomfortable situation. When the Bible speaks of "judging", it's most often used in light of judging someone's salvation related to his or her heart condition. In Matthew 7:1, we read: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged, for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." This passage tells us not to judge "hypocritically" - it's not saying to give up your ability to reason when something or someone is in error. I wouldn't be much of an apologist if I relinquished my ability to discern truth, as Martignoni wants me (and you) to do. If that were the case, no Catholic would be able to judge abortion as being wrong, or homosexuality, or murder, or anything else for fear of "judging" another. That is of course, silly. I was referencing Martignoni's outward anger; anger he admitted harboring.

John Wrote: [Quote: "Faith in faith theology?"](#) What are you talking about? [Do you not have faith that](#)

faith will save you? If so, then is that not "faith in faith theology"? I am interested in truth. No more...no less.

I responded: No – I don't have faith in faith. What's that? Faith in faith will not save you – Christ will. Hindu's have faith in their faith. Buddhists have faith in their faith. Even Satan has faith in something. Faith in the Catholic faith is misplaced, because it mistakenly believes that faith in the Catholic faith and all of its parts is what counts, when really it's faith in Christ that counts. I can have faith in Christ and what He did for me without the Catholic Church, but as a Catholic, you can't. It's essentially bondage because you're tied to the Church, not Christ. We are the "Bride" of Christ, and a Bride follows her husband, not herself.

John writes:

Notice that he first used the phrase, "faith in faith theology," in his email above and I simply repeated it. Yet, when I repeat his phrase he says, "What's that?" I thought I had bad short term memory loss. And, again, I'll get more into his view of the Church in the next newsletter.

What does this mean? How does it advance the discourse? How much weaker can a response be? Answers: Nothing, it doesn't, and not much. It's simply another attempt at creating an issue when there is none. I was repeating what had I'd already said in a different way to drive home the previous point - nothing more. This is often done in the English language. It's just another example of how John gets almost lost on issues that have no real substance because of his great zeal to discredit those who disagree with him. We have yet to see John address anything you can use as a student of Catholicism to help you with your faith, or to enhance your ability to defend your faith. It's all about him. As I said, I see this lot when I speak with atheists, and those who support homosexuality and abortion. When confronted, they often use ad hominem attacks (see my article "John's Arsenal") to deflect from what's really going on. John does the same here, because he has to. His argument has no substance.

John's Quote: "Have you not read Scripture which says, "Judge not lest ye be judged." Yet, you are judging me as being spiritually bankrupt. And, you do this, without ever having met me. I find that fascinating. Has God somehow appointed you to be my judge?"

My Response: No - you're mistaken. I'm not judging you, or your salvation, or your heart condition - which is what the Bible is speaking of with regard to "judging." In fact, on my site I state in one of my articles that I believe you're sincere, and that you believe you're doing the right thing. I'm not judging you, but merely discerning that you're sincerely wrong - you do the same with me. We're called by Scripture to "discern." What's more, I never once claim you're "spiritually bankrupt." Where did you get this? Be careful here. I also point out on my website that one of your apologetic techniques is to use a "red herring" approach with those who disagree with you. Here you do it again. By setting up a dishonest distraction, you're hoping to disarm and lead the conversation elsewhere. It won't work with me - I'm a Christian apologist. I can recognize the ploy - and I suspect you use it because you need to.

John writes:

So, again, by his own definition of judging someone - passing judgment on their "heart condition" - he judged me when he said that I "harbor" anger in my heart. Yet he denies judging me. Also, he denies saying I'm "spiritually bankrupt." Let's go back to his first email above for this quote: "Catholicism is basically spiritually bankrupt. It's religious, but not spiritual. I think this is what has happened to you." He says Catholicism is spiritually bankrupt, and he defines spiritual bankruptcy as being "religious, but not spiritual," and then he says that is what has happened to me. In other words, he said I was spiritually bankrupt, and yet he denies saying I'm spiritually bankrupt. Do you see how easy it is, if you just keep track of what the other guy has said, to catch them in an inconsistency? And we haven't even gotten to doctrinal issues yet.

He's right; we haven't gotten to any of the doctrinal issues yet, because John isn't really interested in that. He wants to take the time to cut me down, and show you how "bad" I am for suggesting that he's angry, and how I'm judging him. Again, this is puzzling, since I explained to

him in the response that the type of “judging” he’s speaking of is a myth Biblically. How can John, a Catholic teacher of the Bible, turn from the Bible and adopt the worldly definition of judgment? Again, the Bible is clear – we are to judge when something is not right, evil, abhorrent to God, or is a sin, and we’re supposed to be able to tell when we being handed a line. I tried to explain to John that I wasn’t judging him personally, but he wouldn’t listen. I explained to him that we are directed to discern, but he wouldn’t listen. This is because he needs to grab on to anything he can to cling to an argument that is unfair, and inaccurate. So, for the record John, I’m not judging you personally, but I have made a discerning decision that your teachings are often wrong and inaccurate. Sorry if that hurts your feelings, but hurting ones feelings doesn’t necessarily qualify as judging. If you believe it does, you owe all the homosexuals, atheists, and abortionists who you claim are wrong a big apology for “judging” them.

Also, note that he takes my statement that the Catholic Church has become spiritually bankrupt, and applies it to himself to make the point that I was somehow attacking him personally. John may, or may not be spiritually bankrupt himself, but one thing is for sure, trading your spirituality for religion is a mistake. If I’m in error in John’s case, I apologize. But then again, I didn’t see him deny it. This is because he knows that if I challenged him to rely on his spiritual relationship with Christ alone, and drop the religious components of the Catholic Church, he wouldn’t be able to do so.

John Writes:

“Notice very carefully that his reason for asking me that question is that "God put it on my heart to ask you that very specific question." Really? How does he know that it was God, and not his own ego, or possibly even the malevolent one? And what proof can he give me that it was God's doing? None. He is going to turn out to be another one in a long line of folks who claim not to be infallible, but who, when responding to what I have to say, act as if they are indeed infallible.”

John does a good job here of answering the “spiritually bankrupt” statement given above. For many Catholics (not all of them), God communicating with them directly is unthinkable. This is most often because Catholics (not all of them) have a relationship with their Church, and that’s enough for them. John seems to agree with this. Someone saying they talk with God, commune with God, or they hear God sounds very foreign to many people. John appears to be no exception in this regard, because his relationship (as he’s already admitted) is with the Church. He’s actually giving credence my point of his possible spiritual bankruptcy without realizing it.

I need give John no “proof” of anything. He can take my statement for what it’s worth – it’s my personal testimony. But if he doubts it, isn’t he the one now judging? How can he judge my relationship with God? Hypocrisy slips in here. The point is that John doesn’t want to hear from someone that claims to listen to God. It makes him uncomfortable. It appears he’ll do his best to discredit them – unless they happen to be Catholic, which is the religion he approves of. Can the Pope himself prove to John that he’s heard from God? No. Yet John holds me to this standard. Do you see the fallacy in his teaching? Do you see how his thinking is skewed? Can you see that what Martignoni argues here is more of his own invention, than anything real? He then starts to lay the groundwork for his next newsletter on me being “infallible.” I never once claimed to be “infallible”, nor will I ever, but that’s not the point for John. What’s important for him here is to discredit; to attack me personally, and start another rabbit trail.

After asking John if he knew why Christ came, he suggests it might be my ego, or even Satan asking the question. How is it one’s own ego to ask another if they know why Christ came? Is that not a legitimate question to ask anyone? I would think that in today’s godless world you would welcome the question. The question was asked of John because he had emphasized the church, as if that was Jesus’ main mission and purpose. It was not. He then answers the question (Jesus came to testify to the truth) but the point goes right over his head. My attempt to get him to see what he was doing was unsuccessful. Anyway, what John is really telling us that he agrees that he might be spiritually weak, as I suggested, because he can see no way that anyone can be sure that God speaks to them. This might be because he’s never had the experience himself, or

maybe he has, but he just can't be sure it was God. How has anyone over the centuries, including the apostles, church fathers, and even the Pope himself been sure that God has spoken to them? According to John, it's not possible for them to know.

Well – that was fun. We can see that through the entire dialog, John didn't really have much to say about most of the interesting and critical issues that were brushed upon. We saw that most often, John's tactics are that of misdirection, straw-man argumentation, ad hominem attack, and discrediting. We see him "invent" arguments that spring from nothing, and we look in vain for any real substance in his remarks. This is to be expected, and all are hallmarks of his ministry. I look forward to the day when we can really get down to some serious discussion, but that would mean that John would have to put his ego aside. Until then, I'll keep an eye on John and post more on my site when it's warranted. I also want you to know that I've contacted John and told him I won't play the email game anymore, because it's not productive. I've suggested that we debate formally, on line, with a structured framework, and a formal topic. If he agrees, it will take him out of his comfort zone of email argument, and into some real discussion. It will be interesting to see if he's up to the challenge.