

The Biggest Obstacle

One of the biggest obstacles any Christian apologist can have is him, or her self. It's very easy to start to take oneself too seriously, and start assuming there's nothing more to learn on a particular subject, and no reason to listen to any other point of view. If you couple this problem with the feeling that you've got it so right that there's no need for you to ever listen to anyone with a different opinion than you have, you have someone like John Martignoni.

The sad part of all this is that once you reach that point, you don't have any more room to grow, and no real way to really strengthen your faith. For instance, if I were a scientist, I might propose a new theory. I would set out my theory, and expose it to scrutiny. I would welcome any and all challenges to it, because if I don't – if I protect it at all cost and deflect any and all challenges with answers I've prepared before hand to shield it, it isn't worth the paper it's written on. The very life blood for my theory is the constant assault, and successful repelling of any arguments that may come against it. We see this with Einstein's general and special theories as they are constantly tested, and subsequently shown to hold true. Since they're constantly shown to be correct, their credibility is strong, and until someone shows otherwise, they're considered to be true. The same should go for our faith. We should not fear and hide from other opinions and points of view, but welcome them. It's in this way that we grow and become strong in our faith – not by dismissing, minimizing, and putting down other points of view as if they're worthless. Other views are never worthless, since they often make up the soul of the person holding them, even if they're incorrect. This should be respected.

With John Martignoni this is not a concern. You can see in my newsletter exchange with him that he starts out assuming he's right. That's fine - I do too when I begin to argue a point on theology. However Martignoni is different because, thinking he's right, he dismisses me out of hand. He doesn't even try to raise any real argument, just the typical “see what he's doing here?” strategy to reinforce what he already believes and has taught, but never showing *why* he's correct. He offers nothing but his rote script and “Those darn Protestants” argument as a defense. How does his student see he's right? Why should anyone believe he's right? Sure, he has his opinion, but where's his apologetic defense? To merely claim I've done something such as “decapitating” the head of Christ, as he claims I do in his newsletter, is useless. He needs to show why he believes my argument fails, not just that he doesn't like what I say. His decapitation argument sounds dramatic, but is it true? He also needs to address my rebuttals and give answers as to why my arguments (including my citations of the Roman Catholic Catechism which argue against his position!) are wrong. He doesn't. Instead he simply believes that he can't be wrong and he hopes, and assumes you believe that too. He uses his popularity as leverage, but offers no substantive case.

My position is that we're to welcome all dissenting opinion – not dismiss it. My task as a Christian apologist is to accept challenges to my faith, and to then show what I believe, and why I believe it. We're not to belittle, minimize, dismiss, or push aside any questioning of our faith, as if we're saying “Look, I have the truth, if you don't accept it – you'll burn in hell.” No, that's not the way we help others, and that's not the way to go about bringing others to Christ.