

## Lesson Plan 2 – Theories Contradictory to Faith

**Objective** – We should aim to achieve the following after this chapter is explained–

1. Students will understand the different theories that contradict Faith
2. They will understand that knowledge about these theories will better equip them to handle any concerted efforts to move them from their Faith by the advocates of these theories that reject God and Faith.
3. Students will be able to build conviction that will help them to not only defend their Faith but be able to vehemently oppose such ideologies and movements with valid and logical justifications.
4. Stir a desire in them to strengthen and deepen their Faith

### Starter - (10 mins)

Douglas Beaumont a former agnostic turned Evangelist, in his testimony on ‘The Coming Home Network International ‘website has described his incredible journey from Agnosticism to Catholicism. Key extracts are reproduced here.

Summarize the story for the students and encourage them to read the complete story on the website

*“All my life I had, to the best of my ability, followed the truth. I was an agnostic because I really thought it was true that we could not know ultimate truths about God. I became a Christian because I really thought it was true that Jesus died for my sins and that the Bible was God’s revelation. I followed the Evangelical version of Christianity because I really thought it was the truest expression of the faith, and I left Evangelicalism when I no longer thought it was true. In the end, the decision eventually made itself. If, and only if, I thought Catholicism was false could I continue to remain outside the Church — and I didn’t think that. I resonated with St. Peter’s words: “To whom shall we go?” (John 6:68).*

*In truth, Catholicism filled in so many of the holes I always had to step around in Evangelicalism, and the Catholic Church offered more of everything I already had and appreciated as an Evangelical. Becoming Catholic, I saw, would be much more about receiving than relinquishing. The final straw came when I read Thomas Aquinas’s explanation of heresy, which really convicted me of my theological autonomy: **“He who adheres to the teaching of the Church, as to an infallible rule, assents to whatever the Church teaches; otherwise, if, of the things taught by the Church, he holds what he chooses to hold, and rejects what he chooses to reject, he no longer adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, but to his own will”** (Summa Theologiae II.II.5.3). This description of heresy was dangerously close to how I had spent my Christian life up to this point. Although the object of my faith was the God of the Bible, I had put my trust in my own thinking all along. Becoming Catholic meant choosing to trust the Church God built instead of myself. I had to honestly ask myself if I could really do that — and what it would mean if I didn’t. “*

**DOUGLAS BEAUMONT** earned a Ph.D. in theology from Northwest University and an MA in apologetics from Southern Evangelical Seminary, where he taught for several years before coming into full communion with the Catholic Church.

He has since appeared on *The Journey Home* and *Catholic Answers Live* and has been interviewed by *The National Catholic Register*, EWTN, Relevant Radio, and *The Patrick Coffin Show*. He is the author of the books *With One Accord*, *Evangelical Exodus*, and *The Message Behind the Movie* and has contributed to *Mind*,

*Heart, and Soul: Intellectuals and the Path to Rome, Bumper Sticker Catholicism, The Best Catholic Writing, and The Apologetics Study Bible for Students*, as well as written for Catholic Answers Magazine and Catholic World Report. He recently became an official speaker for Catholic Answers.

## **Teaching Strategy (15 mins)**

### **1. Introduction -**

What do we mean by Theories contradictory to Faith?

Theories that advocate absence of God, challenge the presence of divinity and Faith. How these can pose challenges to our Faith in the absence of complete knowledge about these theories, lack of conviction of our Faith and inability to answer questions logically.

Can Man claim sole credit to his ability to seek truth and discover the different facets of creation? Can our life be purposeful amidst material needs and seeking pleasure?

Elaborate on the example of Dr. Raymond Damadion who credited his invention of MRI scanner to prayer and the intervention of God. You may add more examples of inventors, athletes, etc. who have testified and glorified God in their success.

### **2. Theories that challenge Faith**

*You may use these additional quotes, examples and explanations to help the students understand the flaws, inconsistencies and incoherencies within these theories.*

#### **1. Agnosticism** – Explain what is Agnosticism

A doctrine that humans cannot know the existence of anything beyond the phenomena of experience and they are incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either the belief that God exists or that God does not exist.

Following statements on Agnosticism from Catholic Answers website can be used to elaborate-

*“the Agnostic confounds “inability to define” with “total inability to know”, which are distinct problems to be treated separately, since knowledge may fall short of definition and be knowledge still.”  
‘The Agnostic denial of the ability of human reason to know God is directly opposed to Catholic Faith. The Council of the Vatican solemnly declares that “God, the beginning and end of all, can, by the natural light of human reason, be known with certainty from the works of creation”.’*

#### **2. Rationalism** – Rationalism, in Western philosophy, the view that regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge. The rationalists’ confidence in reason and proof tends, therefore, to detract from their respect for other ways of knowing.

Substantiate the contradictions inherent in Rationalism by referring to explanations and quotes from Catholic Experts or Apologists.

Extract from Arnold Lunn’s article on Catholic Answers –

*“Rationalism is based on blind faith. The Christian begins by proving, the rationalist by assuming, the first article in their respective creeds.”*

*“Science cannot be more significant than life itself, and if life itself is futile, the acquisition of scientific knowledge is of no importance.”*

*“. theism alone can vindicate the idealism of science and alone can provide a reasoned basis for that mysticism which is the true inspiration of scientific research.”*

3. **Materialism** – Explain Materialism. Emphasize on the fact that this theory is different from the context of ‘being materialistic’. Materialism theory states that all things that exist are made up of matter in some way. All things that exist are made of energy, atoms, molecules, forces and other entities that consist of energy. There are no non-physical or non-material existents.

*“As the word itself signifies, Materialism is a philosophical system which regards matter as the only reality in the world, which undertakes to explain every event in the universe as resulting from the conditions and activity of matter, and which thus denies the existence of God and the soul.*

4. **Humanism** – Explain Humanism. Humanism is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the individual and social potential, and agency of human beings, whom it considers the starting point for serious moral and philosophical inquiry. It is not Theistic and rejects divinity.

5. **Communism** – Explain communism, its origin and the context. Explain how it came into existence as a way to fight class-based oppression but the propagators themselves turned into oppressors by controlling the freedom of the people, denying them religion and using violence to attain their goals.

You can delve on the key highlights of this theory as below – (Taken from a speech by Martin Luther King at Stanford University -

- Communism leaves out God. It regards religion psychologically as wishful thinking, regards religion intellectually as the product of fear and ignorance. It regards religion historically as an instrument serving the ends of exploiters.
- For the communist there is no divine government or no absolute moral order, there are no fixed, immutable principles. So, force, violence, murder, and lying are all justifiable means to bring about the millennial end.
- In the communistic system, you do not have freedom of the press. You do not have freedom of speech. You do not have freedom of assembly. All of these things are under the scrutiny of the state, which is manipulated through the party. And whatever the Party says, that must be done. All of the freedoms that are dear to us are denied. Man has to be a servant, a dutiful and submissive servant of the state.

**Areas of Disagreement with ‘Communism’** - Explain the main areas of disagreement with the theory of Communism

- Atheism and Denial of Religion
- Class war and violence

- Denial of Rights to Property
- Autocracy of the Employees

Explain how the denial of religion and denial of rights to property is equivalent to taking away the fundamental right of freedom of the people. How can they claim of justice and equality when the people themselves are denied their basic fundamental rights?

For communism the end justifies means and hence they advocate violence as a means to end class differences which is opposed to the Christian values of love, sacrifice and forgiveness.

The inequality of power advocated by the theory leads to unwanted unrest and blocking of development and advancement. The rights of all classes of people need to be protected.

Conclude by summarizing the flawed basis and principles of each of these theories and how they contradict the presence of God, our Faith in him, divinity and our religious value system.

### **Appropriate Habit Formation**

- Better equipped to discuss and converse using logical arguments with groups that advocate these theories
- To help your friends and family members who may be struggling with doubts related to these theories or those on the fence to build conviction about presence of God and to reject these theories.
- Value the essence of the belongingness as a Catholic Faithful, our sacraments, spirit of charity and community
- Participate wholeheartedly in our role as an involved Catholic laity and be an example to others around.

### **Discussion : As per textbook pg. 24**

### **Activity**

1. *The students should be asked to write their views on the following real life experience—A catholic friend has fallen on hard times as his father has been laid off from his company and they are financially constrained. He discusses his situation with some of his college friends and starts expressing his frustration about why despite faith and reliance on prayers his family's situation is worsening. One of his friends who is a rationalist tries to use his weak moment to introduce him to Rationalism and seeks to take him away from his belief in God. How as a staunch Catholic friend would you try to help this friend to find his way back to our Faith, solidify his reasoning about God, make him see the inconsistencies and flaws in Rationalism and find true meaning of existence?*
2. *Alternatively, there can be groups made that represent different theories - Agnostics, Humanists, Materialists, Rationalists, Communists and Catholics debating on the basic premises of their theories, how are they justified and why is their theory superior to others.*

### **Closing Reflection – Bible Verse – 2 John 1 – 7:11**

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**If time permits :**

***Extract from Fides et Ratio (Encyclical by St. John Paul II)***

...there were various forms of atheistic humanism, expressed in philosophical terms, which regarded faith as alienating and damaging to the development of a full rationality. They did not hesitate to present themselves as new religions serving as a basis for projects which, on the political and social plane, gave rise to totalitarian systems which have been disastrous for humanity.

***Bishop Robert E Barron*** stated during a lecture on Catholic intellectual tradition stated – “There is no humanism ... greater than Christian theology...There’s no aspiration for a human being higher than divinization.”