

PART ONE, SECTION TWO, CHAPTER ONE, ARTICLE 1 (PARAGRAPHS 199-231)

FAITH: Catholicism | TEXT: Catechism of the Catholic Church | VOLUME: 1997 Volume | AUTHOR: John Paul II (Promulgated by)

OVERVIEW

This section of the Catechism serves as the theological foundation for the entire Catholic faith, asserting that the confession of God's oneness is the most fundamental of all beliefs. It traces the revelation of God from the Old Covenant—specifically the Shema given to Israel and the revelation of the Divine Name (YHWH) to Moses at the burning bush—to the New Covenant revelation of Jesus as 'Lord' (Kyrios). The text synthesizes biblical narrative with Greek metaphysical philosophy, interpreting the name 'I AM' to mean that God is the 'fullness of Being' without origin or end. It emphasizes two primary attributes of God: Truth (His wisdom and reliability) and Love (His gratuitous election of Israel and the sending of the Son). The text concludes by outlining the practical implications of monotheism for the believer: thanksgiving, recognizing human dignity, and a call to ascetic detachment from created things to serve the Creator alone. It relies on Scripture, the Nicene Creed, and the writings of Saints (Augustine, Teresa of Avila) to construct its theology.

KEY FIGURES

God the Father (YHWH), Jesus Christ (The Lord), Moses, Isaiah, St. Peter, St. John the Apostle, St. Augustine, St. Teresa of Jesus (Avila), St. Nicholas of Flue

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. DIVINE ASEITY AND METAPHYSICS

Assertion: God is the 'fullness of Being' and of every perfection. While creatures receive being, God alone IS his very being.

"The revelation of the ineffable name 'I AM WHO AM' contains then the truth that God alone IS... God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection... he alone is his very being (Para 213)."

Evangelical Comparison: The Catechism explicitly links the biblical revelation of YHWH to the philosophical concept of 'Being itself' (Ipsum Esse Subsistens). While Evangelical theology affirms that God is uncreated and self-existent (Acts 17:25), it typically relies on biblical descriptions of God's attributes rather than the metaphysical synthesis found in Catholic Scholasticism. The Catechism elevates the Septuagint's translation and Church Tradition's philosophical interpretation to a dogmatic status, whereas Evangelicalism would view the philosophical explanation as a helpful model but not equal to the biblical text itself.

2. TRINITARIAN MONOTHEISM

Assertion: Belief in the Trinity does not violate the oneness of God; Jesus is Lord, and the Spirit is Lord, yet God is One.

"To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit... introduce any division into the One God (Para 202)."

Evangelical Comparison: Both traditions stand firmly on the Nicene formulation. The text affirms the distinct persons and the unity of essence. There is no friction here; this is a shared core tenet of historic Christianity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Partial

Theological Gap: While the doctrine of God presented here is largely compatible with Evangelicalism, the method of arriving at it differs. The Catechism explicitly relies on the 'Church's Tradition' (Para 213) to define God as 'Fullness of Being.' Furthermore, the application of this doctrine moves quickly to asceticism ('detach ourselves,' Para 226) and the use of prayers by Saints as normative models. For an Evangelical, the authority is Scripture alone, and the response to God's holiness is primarily repentance and faith, with detachment being a secondary fruit of sanctification rather than a primary structural mandate.

Shared Values:

Strict Monotheism; Trinitarianism; Divine Attributes (Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Love, Truth); The Divinity of Christ; The Inspiration of Scripture

Friction Points:

1. [Minor] Sola Scriptura – The text cites the Creed and Church Tradition as necessary lenses for understanding the nature of God.

Semantic Warnings:

"Tradition"

In Text: A binding source of revelation alongside Scripture that interprets the meaning of God's name (Para 213).

Evangelical: Often used negatively in the NT regarding human rules (Mark 7:8), or positively only regarding specific apostolic teachings (2 Thess 2:15), but never as an authority equal to the canon of Scripture.

Example: *The text states 'the Church's Tradition, understood the divine name in this sense' (Para 213).*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: To share in the eternal exchange of love between Father, Son, and Spirit (Para 221).

How Attained: Implied through turning to God, faith, and the 'destiny' God has planned (Para 221).

Basis of Assurance: God's faithfulness and truth; He cannot deceive (Para 215).

Comparison to Sola Fide: This section focuses on Theology Proper, so Sola Fide is not explicitly denied here, but the call to 'detach ourselves' (Para 226) introduces a works-oriented element to the Christian life.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Believe in God the Father Almighty (Para 199)
2. Turn to God and be saved (Para 201)
3. Love God with all heart, soul, and might (Para 201)
4. Serve God first (Para 223)
5. Use created things only insofar as they bring one closer to God (Para 226)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Acknowledge one's own insignificance and sinfulness before God's holiness (Para 208)
2. Trust God completely in adversity (Para 227)
3. Respect the dignity of all men as Imago Dei (Para 225)

Ritual Requirements:

1. Profession of the Creed (implied by the structure of the text)
2. Liturgical adoration (implied by the 'Holy, Holy, Holy' reference)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The Catechism beautifully describes God as 'He Who Is.' How does that impact your daily prayer life knowing God is the source of all being?
2. Paragraph 226 includes a prayer asking God to 'take from me everything that distances me from you.' Do you feel that your standing with God depends on your ability to detach yourself, or on Jesus's attachment to you?
3. When you read that God 'revealed himself progressively' (Para 204), how do you determine which traditions are true developments versus human additions?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Name (YHWH) – Just as God made Himself vulnerable by revealing His name to Moses, He made Himself ultimately vulnerable by taking on flesh in Jesus. We don't just know a name; we know a Person. [John 1:14, Philippians 2:9-11]
2. The Burning Bush – We cannot approach the consuming fire of God's holiness on our own merits. We need a mediator. Jesus is the one who allows us to enter the holy place without being consumed. [Hebrews 12:28-29, Hebrews 10:19-22]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Ascetic Performance [Moderate] – The prayer of St. Nicholas of Flue (Para 226) asks God to 'take from me everything that distances me from you.' While pious, this creates a burden where the believer feels they must strip away all earthly attachments to be close to God, potentially leading to anxiety over enjoying any created good.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation (God disclosing His name) + Reason (Philosophical deduction of Being) + Tradition (Saints/Creeds).

Verification Method: Adherents verify truth through the continuity of the Church's teaching and the testimony of the Saints.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the illumination of the Holy Spirit through Scripture alone (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). The Catechism suggests that the 'Church's Tradition' is necessary to correctly understand the metaphysical implications of the Divine Name.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1997 (Latin Typical Edition)

Authorship: Drafted by a commission under Cardinal Ratzinger, promulgated by Pope John Paul II.

Textual Issues: The text relies on the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Exodus 3:14 ('I Am He Who Is') to support the metaphysical claim of God as Being itself, noting this translation choice in Para 213.