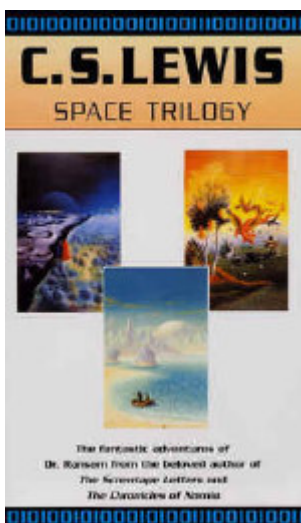


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The Bent One - Could it be Satan?

Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.



In his space trilogy, C.S. Lewis called him "the Bent one." That is really an apt name for the one the Bible calls "Satan" or the Accuser. The perverse choice he made to serve himself rather than his creator warped his nature, and ever since his delight has been twisting anything he can get his hands on.

Take sexual desire for instance. It was created by God to draw together a man and woman in committed, covenant love that issues in new life. As such, sexual desire is clearly a great good. But when it is twisted at the instigation of the "Bent One," it becomes lust--the urge for sterile self-gratification that is willing to trample upon the dignity of another, of many others, to satisfy an itch.

The same holds true for economic drive. No where in the Bible do we see praise for laziness or indigence. Man and woman are given responsibility to care for the garden even before sin enters into the story. Work is holy, and ought to be productive (John Paul II's Theology of Work is as fantastic as his Theology of the Body). And enjoying the fruit of our labor, as well as sharing it with others, are some of the great blessings of human life.

Yet when the drive to work and earn money is twisted, the legitimate pleasure intended by God vanishes and bondage ensues. The workaholic can't get off the treadmill to enjoy the fruit of his labor. He anxiously allows work to become compulsive, eating away at every area of his life. Then we have the greedy of this world who hoard their treasure not enjoying it themselves and not sharing it with others. Instead, money becomes a substitute for God (that, by the way, is the definition of an idol). The greedy seek their identity and ultimate security in money. This is what we see in the rich man of Lk 12. His problem is not that he is excited about a bumper harvest, but that he succumbs to the illusion that this wealth means security. He puts his trust in his warehouses and, of course, they let him down.



1 Tim 6:10 teaches us that the love of money is the root of all evil. I've always found St. Augustine's definition of the love of money to be very enlightening. He points out that the wrong kind of love is not restricted to money. Whenever a created thing becomes no longer a means to love God but an end in itself, then you have a "love" that is idolatry. Do you "love" the idea of finding the perfect mate? To have a better love life within marriage? To have a child? To get a job? To win an athletic championship? To get a college degree? To flourish in business? The desire for all these things can be good indeed. The avid pursuit of each of these things can actually be a duty, depending on one's state in life.



The question, though, is whether these desires and achievements are stepping stones on the road to God or are disastrous detours. Ultimately, a gut check is needed. Are we most intent on things below or on things above? (Col 3) We should be passionate about many things below – but is our zeal for health, love, kids, education, job, financial security truly a function of our zeal for loving God and doing his will? Where do we seek our ultimate satisfaction and security? In these temporal things (even people) that pass away, or in God who is forever? What do we look forward to more, our next promotion or heaven? The great Catholic tradition of a nightly examination of conscience helps us ask such questions daily and keeps us from getting off track.

If you haven't noticed, it does not take us much to drift off track. It's been that way ever since that first fateful conversation in the Garden between our first parents and the Bent One.

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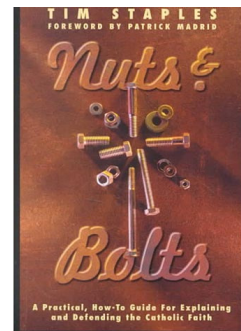
Nuts and Bolts

A Practical, How-To Guide For Explaining and Defending the Catholic Faith

Tim Staples

Foreword by Patrick Madrid

Tim Staples, a former Assemblies of God youth pastor, is a convert to the Catholic Church. During his days as a Protestant, he was convinced that the Catholic Church and most of its teachings were "unbiblical," and he used many biblical arguments trying to demonstrate that. Now, as a Catholic, he is a leading defender of the Catholic Church and in this book he gives you step-by-step answers to fourteen of the most common arguments thrown at Catholics. In each chapter (adapted from Staples' popular "Nuts & Bolts" department in Envoy Magazine), you'll learn how to engage in apologetics with confidence and effectiveness. Packed with scriptural evidence for Catholicism, this book teaches you the basics of apologetics!



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