

Item #64 (“Sincerity Is Not Enough”)

The author of this website is an avid reader of the journal *First Things* and has been for many years. He can and does recommend it unconditionally to anyone interested in the role of religion, especially Catholicism, in the United States. In the August-September issue of the journal for 2020 appeared an article by R. Albert Mohler Jr. entitled “Why I Am a Baptist”. I read the article with great interest and decided I would do something which I rarely do: write a letter to the editor to be published at his discretion. The letter appears below, unchanged from the version I sent him. My reason for writing is contained in the letter. In the second number of the journal published after the original article by Professor Mohler appeared one letter with comments by a reader. This is the normal issue for any comments on an article to appear. No subsequent issue has my comments. Apparently the editor does not intend to publish them. This, of course, is entirely within his rights and I have no complaints to make. But it does seem that the non-appearance of my comments in the journal gives me the right to publish them elsewhere, which I hereby do. The reader is urged to read the original article by Professor Mohler, but even without the fuller knowledge which the reading entails the title is sufficient to explain my comments, made with respect but with a reservation explained in my comments.

What follows is the exact wording of my letter to the editor, as explained above. On a website devoted to my thoughts on Scripture no other explanation seems necessary. (“WHY I AM A BAPTIST” is the title of the article by Professor Mohler in *First Things*.)

WHY I AM A BAPTIST

The undersigned is about to observe the 75th anniversary of his entrance into the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). As a result of collaboration between Divine Providence and my view of Jesuit obedience as “guided initiative” I was assigned to Rome for fifty years, studying, teaching, editing, administering at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. On the side, at the request of Mother Teresa, M.C., of Calcutta, I taught her novices Church History in Rome for 29 years. The unity of Scripture and Tradition. My motto which I used in my Church History class for the novices was “Sincerity is Not Enough”. As background for this motto I could cite the fact that I was able to visit the sites of all the ecumenical councils of the Catholic Church. Thus I was able to help the novices relive the challenges to the council fathers and how they resolved them under the guidance of the Spirit.

I read with great interest R. Albert Mohler Jr.’s “Why I Am a Baptist” (August-September issue). I was much impressed by his sincerity. But my 29 years of teaching Church History to the M.C. novices in Rome and the need I felt to stress to them that sincerity was not enough kept haunting me. I am impressed by sincerity in religion. But 50 years of Scripture and Tradition in Rome was and remains too much of a counterweight.

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