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C0543 – 11/9/2005 – The Terms of Salvation
Roman Catholicism–Part 1

I. REVIEW

In previous weeks we have been evaluating the terms of salvation and in the past four weeks we made application of that to a movement called Lordship Salvation. This is a movement within what is called Protestant Evangelicalism and yet I think we showed that it is another gospel. Paul said to the Galatians

Galatians 1:6-8 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

There are many people who are probably disturbing you and distorting the gospel of Christ. But there really is only one gospel! And we can't front load it or back load it with works. To do so is to destroy grace. So, as in all generations the gospel is under siege and we have to put on the full armor of God, take up the sword and the helmet of salvation and stand against the schemes of the devil. The devil wants to distort the gospel because He knows that just a slight distortion will destroy it. So, if he can distort it then he can keep people from hearing the truth about Christ and being saved.

II. HEARING THE WORD OF GOD ESSENTIAL

I am one of those who believe that the word of God is essential to people being saved. I think a person must hear the word of God in order to have faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17).

III. THE INEPTNESS OF MUCH MISSION WORK

How will they hear and believe if a preacher is not sent? Thus, I am also a believer in the importance of missions. What about the hot-n-tot in Africa? Someone has to be sent out to preach the good news.

Some have developed an imbalance between the importance of preaching the word and the doctrine of divine election. Those who take an extreme view of election often think that God will just zap the elect with salvation! This imbalance worked its way out in two interesting ways. For example, some Puritan parents didn't evangelize their own children because they thought that if they were elect God would zap them with salvation. Another example is the missionary work of extreme Calvinists who originally would preach the gospel to a tribe one time and then move on. They thought that if the people of the tribe heard it one time and did not respond then they must not be elect.

The imbalance between the importance of preaching and divine election is difficult if not impossible to reconcile with the fact that most Christians in the world are Americans. To account for this by saying God elected and loves Americans and does not elect and therefore hates Russians is to do great damage to the word of God. The obvious correlation is rather that where the word of God is freely preached people believe and where it is prohibited or discouraged less people believe. So, the problem is not with God's election *per se* but where He has sent missionaries to preach the word of God so people can believe and be saved! Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17).

On the other hand, Arminian missionaries fall into another trap. Many Arminian missionaries, wanting to get people saved, reduce the claims of the gospel or do not provide foundational information. They bring in the gospel too early in their presentation and don't lay a proper foundation for people who have little or no exposure to the Bible. When this happens there often appears to be great success initially, until one returns and realizes that these people never believed in the Christ of Scripture! Rather, they believed in *a christ* that was then simply tacked on to their many other gods and goddesses (i.e., they placed their faith in the wrong object). Missionaries return to find that these people have put Bible verses above doors to ward away evil spirits or use them as magical incantations. These problems demonstrate that the typical Arminian missionary may have a heart to get people saved but by presenting the gospel to the biblical illiterate in a vacuum only results in syncretism, not genuine conversions. The gospel must be clearly heard and understood in order to be believed! It's not our job to hurry to the gospel message. It's our job to give a

clear and meaningful gospel and this more often than not requires foundational teaching so it can be understood (of which America is now biblically illiterate).

IV. IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING OTHER RELIGIOUS VIEW POINTS

This week I want to turn to a religion that involves 1/6th of the world's population (1,000,000,000 people). In the secular media this religion is normally placed under the title "Christianity" and so I want to evaluate that and see if it really is "Christian". I'm not doing this to stomp on the people who adhere to this religion. I'm doing this for four reasons:

1. to inform you of what this religion teaches;
2. to build compassion in your heart for them;
3. to help you sanctify Christ in your heart ; and
4. so you will be ready to give a defense for truth when anyone asks you, yet in a gentle and reverent manner (1 Pt 3:15).

It is very common for Christians today to say, "I don't care what anyone else believes, I only care about what I believe." That attitude reveals a lack of compassion for others. It is also very naïve. Nor does not take into account the knowledge that Jesus, Paul and John had of different religious viewpoints floating around in the Mediterranean world of their day. We need to be aware of and knowledgeable of other religious viewpoints.

For example, Jesus was fully in tune with the religion of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Samaritans. What is interesting about Jesus' dialogues with people from these groups is the way He responds to them in discussion. If it was a Sadducee (e.g., Matt 22:23ff) who challenged Him Jesus responded by citing from their own authority. For example, when the Sadducees came questioning Jesus about the resurrection, which Sadducee's denied, Jesus quoted from the Torah (Exod. 3:6), the first five books of the OT, the only section of the OT accepted by the Sadducee's as having divine authority. Jesus could have appealed to any OT scripture but He chose to argue from what they accepted as authoritative. Jesus was able to show them from their own authority how ignorant they were of their own authority. His argument was so cogent that the Sadducee's had no answer. It is important to realize that Jesus was not trying to win an argument; He was aiming to stimulate a heart change. Jesus knew very well what the worldview of the Sadducee's entailed and was able to use it to stimulate a repentant faith.

The same is true for Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees who had twisted the Law (e.g., Matt. 22:34ff). Jesus, because He always stood on the truth, was able to answer any challenge and able to leave the Pharisees fumbling in the wake of His argument. Again, Jesus was

not trying to win arguments. He was trying to break through all the baggage and stimulate a heart change. He was able to do this effectively because He knew His opponents' worldview.

Lastly, Jesus, though He never stepped foot outside the land of Israel did cross paths with a Samaritan woman (John 4:9ff). He was so adept at knowing the Samaritan people that He was able to say the things to her that would result in her salvation. One missions group that I know follows this approach is Good Seed. I would argue that Paul used the same method as Jesus.

For example, even a cursory reading of Paul's dialogues in the marketplace with Jews and Romans demonstrates his knowledge of their worldviews. For example, in Lystra Paul quickly recognized that the miracle he did and the gospel he preached were syncretized (Acts 14:7ff). The people interpreted Paul and Barnabas as gods. Thus, Paul quickly remedied the situation by drawing the Creator-creature distinction and making himself out to be a creature. Unlike the Arminian missionary, Paul then took the time to go back to the doctrine of God and lay the foundation for the gospel. In Athens Paul spoke with the leading philosophers of his day (Acts 17:16ff). Here again, the pagans didn't have a clue about Jesus and the resurrection. Thinking that these were two new gods, Paul was given opportunity to clarify at Mars Hill. There again, he was not antsy about getting to the gospel. He knew the worldview of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Acts 17:18) and was able with just one Greek word to challenge them both (Acts 17:22 the words "very religious" *deisidaimonia*). We would say Paul killed two birds with one stone. This demonstrates how keenly aware Paul was of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies and how he even knew their points of similarity and difference. Then he went on to lay the foundation once more for understanding Jesus and the resurrection and he did this by teaching the doctrine of God and the Creator-creature distinction. Only in that context does the resurrection have meaning. Paul was not trying to win an argument, he was trying to break through the depravity of their minds so that they could have a repentant faith (cf Acts 17:30, 34). I could go on and on with examples like this but I think we've made our point.ⁱ

If we want to follow Peter's command to be like Jesus and Paul and effectively defend Christ then we need to have an understanding of the religious viewpoints in our world. This is becoming increasingly apparent in America with the influx of immigrants from other cultures. It is foolish to think that it is just people that immigrate here; its people who carry cultural and religious baggage. Eventually this baggage seeps into our culture effectively blinding our children and grandchildren from the gospel (2 Cor 4:4).

1 Peter 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5 *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

V. ROMAN CATHOLICISM

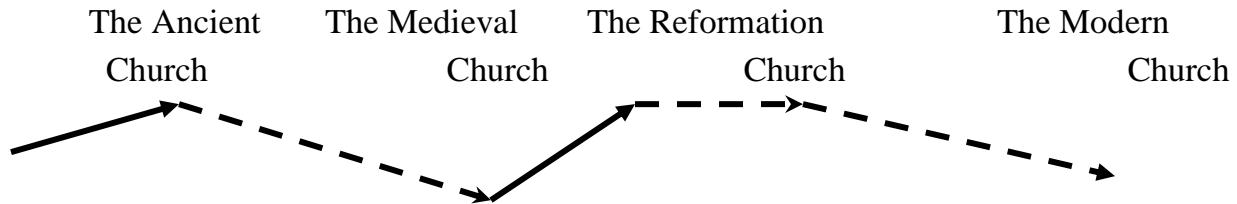
This week I simply want to introduce you to the religion of Roman Catholicism, some of the teachings and the seven basic kinds of Catholics. Next week we will point by point compare some of their teachings with verses from the Bible.

A. Beginnings of the Catholic Church

A survey of the word “catholic” is in order since it is so confused. A *Catholic Dictionary* gives this definition “*Catholic*. The word is derived from the Greek, and simply means universal.” It is often wrongly applied solely to the Church of Rome. In fact, strictly speaking “Roman Catholic” is a contradiction of terms. Catholic means *universal*; Roman means *particular*.

Roman Catholicism began in the 4th century under the reign of Constantine who, in 324AD, made Christianity the official religion of the Western Roman Empire. With membership in the Church came many privileges and so pagans by the thousands pressed in to become members. Membership was by baptism only and not by conversion. The numbers were so great that it was impossible to instruct them all in Christianity. These pagans, more used to pagan rituals that appealed to their sinful natures, were not satisfied with the simple Christian worship. (Unfortunately, today many Protestants have begun to search for more than the Bible’s simple worship). As a result, they added elaborate pagan rituals which included their heathen beliefs and practices (Protestant churches are constantly under pressure to add these today to accommodate to the culture). Gradually this overwhelmed the church and the church became more heathen than Christian. In fact, many of the heathen temples were taken over and re-dedicated as churches.

Over time the church adopted a sacrificing and elaborately appareled priesthoodⁱⁱ, elaborate rituals, images, holy water, incense, monks and nuns, the doctrine of purgatory, and in general a belief that salvation was achieved by works rather than by grace. Thus, the church in Rome and throughout the Empire ceased to be the apostolic Christian church.



Today Roman Catholicism accounts for one out of every six people on the planet. The Vatican claims near one billion souls as members. Why has it grown to such numbers? Boettner says,

“the real cause of Roman Catholic growth and success...is to be found...in the indifference of Protestants and their lack of devotion to their own evangelical message.”ⁱⁱⁱ

J Marcellus Kik said,

“These enemies could be completely vanquished if the Christians of this day and age were as vigorous, as bold, as earnest, as prayerful, and as faithful as Christians were in the first several centuries and in the time of the Reformation.”

B. The Evolution of Roman Catholic Doctrine

Prayers for the dead	~ 300
Making the sign of the cross	300
Veneration of angels and dead saints and use of images	375
The Mass, as a daily celebration	394
Beginnings of the exaltation of Mary, the term “Mother of God”	431
Priests began to dress differently from laymen	500
The doctrine of Purgatory, established by Gregory I	593
Latin language used in prayer and worship	600
Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels	~ 600
Title of Pope, or universal Bishop (Boniface III)	607
College of Cardinals established	927

Fasting on Fridays and during Lent	998
The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance obligatory	11 th century
Celibacy of the priesthood	1079
The Rosary, mechanical praying with beads (Peter the Hermit)	1090
Sale of Indulgences	1190
Transubstantiation	1215
Auricular Confession of sins to a priest rather than to God	1215
Bible forbidden to laymen (Council of Toulouse)	1229
Purgatory proclaimed as dogma (Council of Florence)	1439
Doctrine of Seven Sacraments affirmed	1439
Jesuit order founded by Loyola	1534
Tradition declared of equal authority with the Bible (Council of Trent)	1545
Apocryphal books added to canon (Council of Trent)	1546
Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (Pope Pius IX)	1854
Syllabus of Errors...condemned freedom of religion, conscience, speech, press, and scientific discoveries which are disapproved by the Roman Church; pope's temporal authority over all civil rulers ^{iv}	1864
Infallibility of the pope (Vatican Council)	1870
Assumption of the Virgin Mary (her bodily ascension into heaven)	1950
Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church	1965

This list is to show you how the teachings of the Roman Church have evolved and gradually moved farther and farther away from the Scriptures. In short, human teachings have replaced the Bible. The authority of tradition has completely overridden the authority of the Bible. I would suggest to anyone who doubts this that they read the NT for themselves. Most Catholics I have talked with know little to nothing about the Bible. Likely because it is a forbidden book and can only be rightly interpreted by the expert interpreters of the Roman Catholic Church. For a Catholic to even read the Bible is a venial sin. But in recent years, I have become aware that some priests have permitted laymen to read the Confraternity version that includes the expert interpretation of the Roman Catholic 'exegetes.' Nowhere in the Bible will you find the need for the expert 'exegetes' to dictate the Bible's interpretation. This is just another means of controlling the people. I would suggest you find out for yourself what the Bible teaches and if it teaches any of these things just mentioned. Read the NT and you will search in vain for even the slightest hint at any of these doctrines. What is so stunning is that most of these doctrines listed above are binding on all Roman Catholics because they have been proclaimed by a supposedly infallible pope or church council. To deny any so proclaimed is to commit mortal sin and be anathematized from the Roman Church.

C. Kinds of Roman Catholics

I realize that every professing Roman Catholic does not have the same level of commitment to the doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Therefore, I think it is helpful to look at some of the different types of Roman Catholics. Further I might add that just because a person is Roman Catholic does not mean they can't be a genuine Christian. However, when I talked to the ex-Catholic for Christ, Mike Gendron, who has a ministry specifically to Roman Catholics, I asked him, "how many Catholics are genuine Christians?" He responded by saying, "In my years of interaction with Roman Catholics less than 1% could have possibly been genuinely saved." He also said that "you should never ask a Roman Catholic how to get to heaven but how to keep from going to hell". He said, "the answer to that question will tell you whether they are a genuine Christian or not." I also have a friend Joseph Barboza who is from Brazil and went into the priesthood. The abuses of the priesthood were too much for his conscience and he left and is now a Protestant minister in America. I asked him a similar question, I said, "Can a Roman Catholic be a genuine Christian?" He answered with a question, "Can you be a Christian if you believe that wearing a *scapular* saves? Can you be a Christian if you believe that the Pope is Christ on earth? Can you be a Christian if you believe that the seven sacraments are necessary for salvation? Can you be a Christian if you believe that in the Mass the Priest actually offers a sacrifice for sins? Can you be a Christian if...?" and he went on and on. This is a man who left the priesthood and was abandoned by his family for leaving.

The victims of the Roman system are the laity who are schooled to accept the teachings of the church implicitly and are almost totally ignorant of the political machinations of their clergy. See, the higher you go up in the hierarchy the more political the organization becomes.

Political

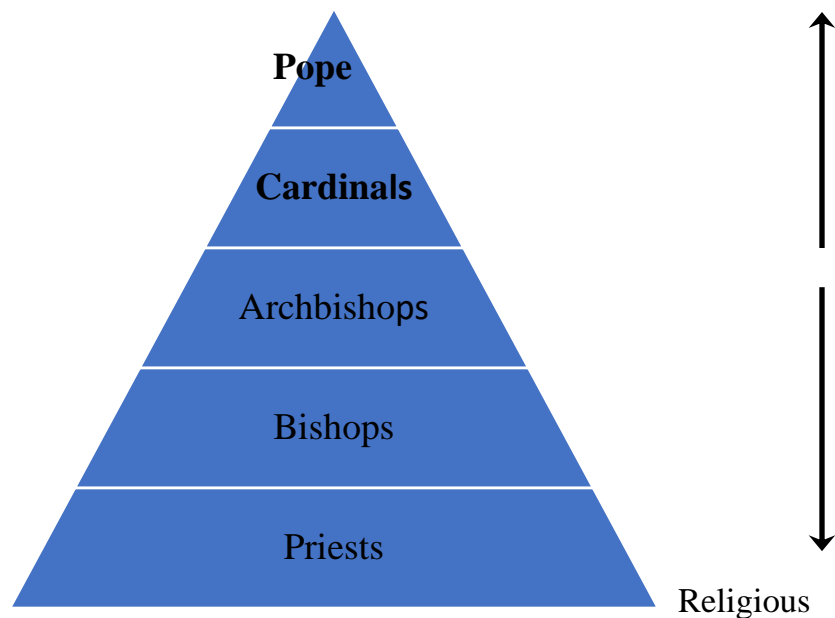


Fig 1. The Hierarchy of the Roman Catholic System

The priests are the crux of the whole system because they control the laity through the confessional system. Learning everything about them, thus putting fear into them, and having control over them.

There are seven basic kinds of Roman Catholics.

1. Converts
2. Spiritual Suicides
3. Genuinely Naïve
4. Practical
5. Nominal
6. Liberals
7. Good People

The “converts” are a small group of people who see the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and “jump on the bandwagon”. These are the kind of people who see an opportunity to gain a position and influence.

The “spiritual suicides” are the largest group. These are not serious about religious truth but have realized that through the Roman Catholic Church they can gain a promise of heaven by giving money and repeating sterile formulas.

The “genuinely naïve” are enamored by “the beautiful music, gorgeous trappings, fragrant incense, majestic temples, and eye filling spectacles which Rome Designed to lull the senses into a state of euphoria which the victim mistakes for heavenly transport.

The “practical Catholic” is the man who uses the Roman Catholic Church for personal reasons, to advance his career through church connections. They are normally very active in promoting Catholic ideology because by doing so they make themselves visible.

The “nominal Catholic” is the one who is born into the Catholic Church. His family has been Catholic for generations. He is normally not very interested but they follow the rules of the Church when it suits their convenience, attend mass regularly and vote for Roman Catholic candidates.

The “real liberals” are a small group who have integrity. They cannot reconcile their conscience with the teachings of the church and eventually their conscience wins out and they leave the church.

The “good people” make up about 1/3 of the Church and these people are good, self-respecting, honest people. They are a little naïve but they are good neighbors and are the kind of people that Protestants stand up for whenever someone makes any negative statement about the Roman Catholic Church. These people are those who would probably leave if they knew the true purpose, motives and character of the church’s leadership. However, normally they do not investigate the doctrinal teachings of Catholicism. If you can get them to investigate and read the NT then they would be disgusted and would leave.

VI. CONCLUSION

Those are the seven basic kinds of Catholics. A lot of what I have said has probably angered many of you because you have Catholic friends. It is not my intent to anger but to inform you of the system of Roman Catholicism. I will tell you that the normal response I get from Protestants who have Catholic friends is that their Catholic friend must be a believer because they said this or that. Don’t be blinded by friendship. No one ever got to heaven because they were someone else’s friend. It is a normal human response to think that our friends must be believers but I assure you, if you are truly a friend then you will not detract from the importance of questioning them. The Catholic system has most of your friends enslaved. I assure you, more than likely your friend is not genuinely born again. If you have ever made any effort to talk with them about spiritual things you know they have precious little Bible instruction from their priests. And that is because the priests have

received precious little themselves during their 12 years of training. L. H Lehmann, former priest and founder of *The Converted Catholic Magazine* said that only in the last years of seminary training did they receive any instruction on the Bible and that was in Latin. “The Scripture course itself was merely an apologetic for papal interpretation of certain texts of Scripture to suit the past historical development and aims of the papal power. Nothing was taught or indicated to us about the spiritual, individual message of Christ in the Gospel itself. Hence, what was sought in teaching the Bible was a glib use of tag-ends of texts in defense of papal power.” (*The Soul of a Priest*, 54). And that is one reason we are evaluating a very small portion of Catholicism. You will not hear the gospel of Christ in any Catholic Church. And yet to be born again one must hear the gospel. For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Let these informative facts not enrage you but create compassion in your heart for lost souls. We simply cannot assume that they have heard the gospel message.

ⁱ For example, that John the apostle was keenly aware of pre-Gnostic philosophy as well as Judaism is obvious from Colossians and 1 John.

ⁱⁱ The Roman priesthood is a carry-over from the OT priesthood. But now there is no longer a need for a priesthood, Jesus Christ is our High Priest.

ⁱⁱⁱ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1962), 16.

^{iv} The full *Syllabus of Errors* if accessed on the internet

(<http://www.geocities.com/militantis/syllabus.html>) demonstrates that one cannot be at the same time a member of the Roman Catholic Church and a loyal American citizen. It must always be kept in mind when reading a positive affirmation of the syllabus that each point was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church under Pope Pius IX.

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