

Ecclesiology

Topic 8 – Survey of Denominational Beliefs – Roman Catholicism

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Introduction

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Rom 1:16

However, a distorted (or changed or incomplete) gospel has no power to save. From the earliest days of the church there have been those who distorted the true gospel. Paul warns the Galatian believers concerning this:

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly **deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel**; ⁷which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to **distort the gospel of Christ**. ⁸But 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!** ⁹As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! Gal. 1:6-9

The Scriptures teach that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (Satan). Therefore, the world's religious philosophies are Satan's doing. Satan's servants are false teachers that disguise themselves as teachers of the truth and doers of righteousness.

^{19b}and that **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one**. 1 John 5:19b

¹³For such men are **false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ**. ¹⁴No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is not surprising if his **servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness**, whose end will be according to their deeds. 2 Cor 11:13-15

The Scriptures declare that in the church age (cf. 1 John 2:18; 1 Pet 1:20; Heb 1:2; 9:26) people who profess to follow Jesus will turn away from the truth to follow doctrines of demons.

¹But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 1 Tim 4:1

The Scriptures also proclaim that we should test what people say to ensure if it is from God or Satan. Whatever is presented as truth must be compared with the Scriptures to see if it is truth.

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, **but test the spirits to see whether they are from God**, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 1 John 4:1-3

¹¹Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so**. Acts 17:11

The bottom line is that any distortion of the true gospel is the work of Satan whose aim is to deceive people into thinking that they are doing what is needed to be rewarded heaven upon death. This is salvation by works (doing "good" things and not doing "bad" things).

If one carefully studies the various religions and cults of the world, he will soon discover that, without exception, **they are founded on some form of human effort and works-righteousness.** ... Only grace-centered, biblical Christianity is from God. Every other form of religion is from Satan, inspired by his demon spirits, promoted by his lying human agents (1 Tim. 4:1-2), and centered in works righteousness. MacArthur's NT Commentary: Galatians

Evaluation Strategy

Roman Catholicism (RC) is a historically Christian group – meaning that it has its roots in orthodox belief, but has since developed slowly into what it is today. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) holds many doctrines that are considered orthodox including: 1) the inerrancy of the Bible; 2) the Trinitarian nature of God; 3) the deity of Jesus Christ; and 4) Christ's virgin birth, sinless life, crucifixion, and resurrection. However, there are many Catholic doctrines that are unbiblical (even heretical) (see VBC notes on Church History pp. 51-53). Errors in Catholic doctrine are present in almost every major area of systematic theology. We could spend a great deal of time investigating each. However, today we will focus on these five areas:

1. the source of authority
2. the nature of God including the Trinity
3. the person and work of Jesus Christ
4. the nature of man
5. the means of salvation.

Before we do this evaluation, we should note that official Catholic doctrine may not necessarily be what your Roman Catholic friend believes and most likely does not even know. Regardless, the Roman system reinforces these beliefs even if they are not specifically known by Roman Catholics.

Source of authority

To understand Catholic teaching concerning authority we can look at the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) published in 1992 (1994 in English). The CCC is a summary of all essential and basic teachings of Catholicism. These teachings are derived from many sources:

- The Catholic Bible (66 books of the Protestant Bible plus the Apocrypha)
- The decrees of ecumenical councils; 21 recognized, however three are the most referenced
 - the Council of Trent (1545-1563)
 - the First Vatican Council (1869-1870)
 - the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)
- Writings of Popes
- The Code of Canon Law – 1752 laws that govern the RCC
- Church liturgy – public worship and practice of the RCC
- The Catechism of the Council of Trent – Guide to the RCC faith published in 1566 by Pius V
- Thomas Aquinas' (c. 1225-1274) "Summa Theology"

According to official RCC teaching, the source of authority does not rest with Scripture alone, but with Scripture, tradition, and the Pope – each with equal authority.

"Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age". CCC p80

"*Sacred Scripture* is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. **And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God** which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching." CCC p81

"As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. **Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.**" CCC p82

"It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, **sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.** Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls." CCC p95

"**The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority** when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful ... he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such." CCC p891

"The task of **interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church**, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him." CCC p100

We agree with Catholicism that Scripture is authoritative, though only the 66 books that were recognized before the council of Trent.

Rejection of the Old Testament Apocrypha as Authoritative (from VBC notes on Theology)

The Apocrypha (or deuterocanonical books) consists of a set of books written between approximately 400 BC and the time of Christ. The word "Apocrypha" means "hidden". The Apocrypha includes (see carm.org for details on each book):

- The Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C.), known as the Book of Wisdom.
- Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.), also known as Sirach.
- Tobit (c. 200 B.C.).
- Judith (c. 150 B.C.).
- 1 Maccabees (c. 110 B.C.)
- 2 Maccabees (c. 110 B.C.)
- Prayer of Azariah (c. 100 B.C.) placed as Daniel 3:24-90 by Roman Catholics.
- Susanna (c. 100 B.C.) placed as Daniel 13 by Roman Catholics.
- Bel and the Dragon (c. 100 B.C.), placed as Daniel 14 by Roman Catholics.
- Baruch (c. 150-50 B.C.), placed as Baruch 1-5 by Roman Catholics.
- Letter of Jeremiah (c. 300-100 B.C.) placed as Baruch 6 by Roman Catholics.
- Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.), placed as Esther 10:4-16:24 by Roman Catholics.
- 1 Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.), also known as 3 Esdras.
- 2 Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.), known as 4 Esdras.
- Prayer of Manasseh (c. 100 B.C.)

The Roman Catholic Council of Trent accepted all of the OT Apocrypha as canonical in 1546, with the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. While there are 15 total books in the Apocrypha, Roman Catholic Bibles count only 11 because they combine the Letter of Jeremiah with Baruch and omit 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. The teaching of 2 Esdras 7:105 in opposition to prayer for the dead may have led to its exclusion by the RCC.

The reasons suggested for the OT Apocrypha as Scripture include:

- Some early church fathers accepted these books (Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria).
- The Syriac church accepted them in the fourth century.
- The Eastern Orthodox Church accepts them.
- The RCC proclaimed them as canonical in 1546.
- The Apocrypha was included in Protestant Bibles, including the original King James Version of 1611.
- Some of the Apocrypha was found among other OT books with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

However, there is abundant compelling evidence for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired by God. While these books may be of historical value and in some ways supplement God's truth, they are not canonical for the following reasons:

- Jesus and the apostles did not accept these books as part of the Scripture. There are no NT references to any of the Apocrypha as being authoritative in any way. The NT writers quote not one part of the Apocrypha.
- Judaism has never accepted these books as part of the Scriptures. Ancient Jewish leaders specifically rejected the Apocrypha (Josephus, Philo).
- While a few early church leaders may appear to take some material from the Apocrypha, most were opposed to the inclusion of the Apocrypha into the canon of Scripture (Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Origen). Furthermore, no church council for the entire ancient church accepted these books as Scripture.
- The Apocrypha itself recognizes our OT canon as a distinct twenty-four books, which corresponds to the Hebrew Bible as it is known today. In 2 Esdras 14:44-48, seventy books are distinguished from ninety-four, leaving twenty-four, or exact number of the Hebrew canon, which became our 39 OT books. Not only does the Apocrypha not claim inspiration for itself, it actually disclaims it when 1 Maccabees 9:27 describes an existing cessation of prophecy.
- The Apocrypha includes unbiblical teaching, including prayers for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:45, or 12:46 in Roman Catholic Bibles) and salvation by works (Tobit 12:9).
- The first official adoption of the Apocrypha by the RCC came at the Council of Trent in 1546, over 1,500 years after the books were written. This was part of a reaction by Catholicism against the Protestant Reformation and if anyone did not accept these books they were considered accursed. When the Apocrypha appeared in Protestant Bibles, it was normally placed in a separate section since it was not considered of equal authority.
- When Greek manuscripts do include books of the Apocrypha, they do not do so completely. In fact, no Greek manuscript contains the exact collection of the books of the Apocrypha as was accepted by the Council of Trent. While the Syrian church accepted the Apocrypha in the fourth century, the translation of the Bible into Syrian in the second century A.D. did not include it.
- The Qumran community had hundreds of books in its library that were not Scripture. While the library had some of the Apocrypha, it did not have commentaries on the Apocrypha as it did with OT books. OT books had special script and parchment, unlike the Apocrypha. Qumran clearly considered the Apocrypha as different from Scripture.

Up until the Council of Trent established the Apocrypha by the RCC, different people viewed it with different degrees of value. Very few considered it to be Scripture and if so it was for flawed reasons. We should not consider people who view the Apocrypha highly as necessarily supporting it as authoritative Scripture.

Rejection of Tradition as Authoritative

“Tradition” (*paradosis*) is used 13 times in the NT and means that which is delivered, the substance of a teaching. It is used both negatively (Matt 15:3; 6; Mark 7:3; 5; 8; 9; 13; Gal 1:14; Col 2:8) and positively (2 Thess 3:6; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Cor 11:2) depending of the context.

Traditions (*paradosis*) means “that which is passed along by teaching” and is used in a negative way in the New Testament when it refers to man-made ideas or practices (as is Matt. 15:2-6; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8). But the term is also applied to divinely revealed teaching, as here and in 2 Thess 2:15. To Paul’s inspired apostolic teaching the Corinthian believers had held firmly. MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians 11:2

Negatively it is used to refer to man-made doctrines, teaching, or rules which take the place of Scripture. These traditions “invalidate the word of God” (Matt 15:6). Invalidate (*akyroō*) means to render void or deprive of force or authority.

³And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves **transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?** Matt 15:3

⁶he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And *by this* you **invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.** Matt 15:6

⁵The Pharisees and the scribes asked* Him, “**Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders,** but eat their bread with impure hands?” ⁶And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.’ ⁷‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ ⁸“**Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.**” ⁹He was also saying to them, “**You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.**” ¹⁰“For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH’; ¹¹but you say, ‘If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given *to God*),’ ¹²you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; ¹³*thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition* which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.” Mark 7:5-13

⁸See 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. Col 2:8

Positively it is used to refer to inspired apostolic teaching – i.e. Scripture.

⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not **according to the tradition which you received from us.** 2 Thess 3:6

¹⁵So then, brethren, **stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.** 2 Thess 2:15

²Now **I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.** 1 Cor 11:2

From these passages, it is clear that “tradition” is acceptable if it does not invalidate the word of God. Scripture has the final authority. We must not exceed what is written.

⁶Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you **may learn not to exceed what is written**, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. 1 Cor 4:6

⁵**Every word of God is tested**; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. ⁶**Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you**, and you will be proved a liar. Prov 30:5-6

In addition, only Scripture is referred to as being written by men “moved” by the Holy Spirit and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

²⁰But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, ²¹**for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.** 2 Pet 1:20-21

¹⁶**All Scripture is inspired by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17

Rejection of the Pope as Authoritative

(This information is from “The Gospel According to Rome” by James McCarthy) Concerning the Pope, the RCC believes that it’s hierarchy, culminating with the bishop of Rome (Pope) derives authority from three beliefs: 1) Christ made Peter the head of the apostles and the universal church, 2) the apostles appointed bishops as their successors, and 3) the Pope is Peter’s successor. However, each of these beliefs are in error.

1. Peter was not the head of the apostles and the universal church

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said* to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸“**I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. Matt 16:13-20

Catholicism claims that Matthew 16:18 shows that Peter is the rock upon which Christ will build His church. However, the Greek does not support this interpretation. Peter is the masculine noun “petros” meaning boulder whereas rock is the feminine noun “petra” meaning mass of rock. The verse is equivalent to saying, “you are Peter, and upon this mass of rock, I will build My church.”

The question then is, “What is the ‘bedrock’ upon which Christ is building His church?” The context in this passage is about Christ and who He is – “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Therefore, the foundation of the church is Christ not Peter.

¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 3:11

Also, while it is true that Peter is usually listed first in the lists of the apostles this does not mean that he was the head of the apostles – see Acts 15:6-35 where James seems to speak as the head of the apostles.

2. The apostles did not appoint bishops as their successors

Scripture used by the RCC to justify this is 2 Timothy 2:2 which simply speaks of discipling men to disciple other men.

²The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Tim 2:2

In addition, Timothy and Titus are held up as examples of bishops appointed by Paul, Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete. However, Scripture nowhere calls these men out as bishops and Paul simply calls them “partner and fellow worker” (2 Cor 9:23). Even if they had been a “bishop” they would have been one of a plurality of elder / bishop / shepherds.

3. The Pope is not Peter’s successor

There is no Scriptural evidence to support this claim by the RCC. Historically, this did not become a dogma until after the time of the apostles.

Clearly we must join with the reformers and declare that Scripture alone is the authority for the believer. The Scriptures are authoritative and constitute the believer’s only source of faith and practice (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Only Scripture is perfectly adequate for all matters of faith and conduct – for salvation *and* sanctification. It is all-sufficient in regards to the soul of man, in our relationship to God, and in our relationship to others.

The Nature of God Including the Trinity

The RCC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of God, including the doctrine of the Trinity. Protestants should be grateful for the RCC’s defense of a Biblical definition of the Trinity.

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

The RCC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the person and work of Christ. Catholics affirm Jesus as the second Person of the Trinity and His full deity and full humanity. Catholics believe Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a Roman cross, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead. He returned to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Protestants should be grateful for the RCC’s defense of a Biblical definition of the person of Christ.

The Nature of Man

Catholics believe that human beings are created in God's image. Every person is a unique, precious being of dignity and worth. By their free will, human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature and pursuing a course of life that is opposed to His essential character and revealed law.

However, Catholics distinguish between two types of sin: mortal and venial (CCC p1854). Mortal sin destroys the sanctifying grace of God within the individual and necessitates forgiveness through a sacrament of reconciliation (CCC p1856) which reconciles one with God (CCC p1468) and obtains “forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism” (CCC p1486). Unrepented (i.e. dealt with through the sacrament of reconciliation) mortal sins cause exclusion from heaven and results in “the eternal death of hell” (CCC p1861). Catholics classify a sin as mortal when it meets the following conditions: the sin is serious or “grave” (murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, etc.) and is committed with “full knowledge and complete consent” (CCC, p1857-59).

A venial sin is a sin that either is not serious or grave or does not involve full knowledge or complete consent (CCC p1862). Unlike mortal sin, venial sin does not destroy the saving grace of God in the individual. “Venial sin does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity, and consequently eternal happiness” (CCC p1863).

Biblical Response: By their free will, mankind chose to sin against God and are therefore under the condemnation of physical and spiritual death (eternal separation from their creator) (Gen 3; Rom 3:23; Isa 59:1-2). The corruption of sin extends to every aspect of our being (Rom. 1:18–3:20) including intellect (2 Cor. 4:4), conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), will (Rom. 1:28), and heart (Eph. 4:18). All people are therefore unable to enter into a personal relationship with God on their own initiative (Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3). For the Believer, the Bible does not distinguish between “big” sins and “little” sins. The result of sin in the believer’s life is loss of fellowship (1 John 1:6); church discipline (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5); the Lord’s discipline (Heb 12:6); and sometimes physical death (1 Cor 11:30). The remedy for sin when it occurs in the believer’s life is repentance and confession to God (Heb 6:1; 1 John 1:9).

The Means of Salvation

John MacArthur and Paul Enns provide a good summary of the Catholic view of salvation.

According to Roman Catholicism, justification is a process in which God’s grace is poured forth into the sinner’s heart, making that person progressively more righteous. During this process, it is the sinner’s responsibility to preserve and increase that grace by various good works. The means by which justification is initially obtained is not faith, but the sacrament of baptism. Furthermore, justification is forfeited whenever the believer commits a mortal sin, such as hatred or adultery. In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, then, works are necessary both to begin and to continue the process of justification. “Is Roman Catholicism Biblical?” by **John MacArthur on the GTY Website**

... the entire system of sacraments is a genuine rejection of the true grace of God and salvation by grace. Salvation in Roman Catholic theology is not by grace through faith but a complex adherence to the sacraments and rituals as legislated by the church hierarchy. The Moody Handbook of Theology by Paul P. Enns

(This information is from “The Gospel According to Rome by James McCarthy) Catholicism teaches that God's grace is granted through the sacrament of baptism. This “sanctifying grace” is a gift of the Holy Spirit, but can be lost through serious, conscience, and deliberate sin. It can then be regained through penance. There is also “actual grace” which is a temporary supernatural assistance to perform good works necessary for salvation. The sacraments (baptism, penance, Eucharist, confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, and anointing the sick) are the primary means by which God provides sanctifying and actual grace. This then enables the Catholic to do good works which are rewarded with heaven after final purification in purgatory.

- Infants receive grace through the sacrament of baptism and adult converts receive grace through the sacrament of baptism after proper preparation.

"...**Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins** because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that 'we too might walk in newness of life,'" CCC p977

“Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism.” CCC p2020

RCC definition of justification = Spiritual rebirth and the lifelong process of sanctification which begins at the point of the sacrament of baptism.

- Sacraments and good works increase grace in the soul; cooperation with grace preserves grace in the soul.

"We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere 'to the end' and **to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ,**" CCC p1821

"Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, **we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification.**" CCC p2010

- Grace is lost through mortal sin, but can be regained through the sacrament of penance.

"Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that **the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification.** The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as 'the second plank (of salvation) after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace,'" CCC p1446

"One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, **must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience.**" CCC p1493

"By Christ's will, **the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance.**" CCC p986

- Eternal life is attained by dying in a state of grace. If one has not attained the state of holiness required to enter directly into heaven then they go to purgatory to make atonement for sins that were not made on earth.

"All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." CCC p1030

In contrast to Catholicism's salvation of works, the Bible teaches clearly that salvation is by grace (unmerited favor) through faith alone. Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works.

According to the largest meaning as used in the Scripture, the word "salvation" represents the whole work of God by which He rescues man from the eternal ruin and doom of sin and bestows on him the riches of His grace, including eternal life now and eternal glory in heaven. Major Bible Themes by Lewis Sperry Chafer

By Grace:

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Eph 2:8-10

⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. Rom 11:6

²¹"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." Gal 2:21

⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-7

Through True Saving Faith:

⁴⁷“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. John 6:47

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Rom 3:28

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, Rom 4:5

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom 5:1

¹⁶nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. Gal 2:16

²⁴Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. Gal 3:24

Kept forever:

The Scriptures declare that nothing can separate the believer from the Christ (Rom 8:28-39). All true believers once saved are kept by God's power and are always saved (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Eph 4:30; Heb 7:25; 13:5; 1 Pet 1:5; Jude 24). When a professor of Christ turns away it shows that true salvation never took place (1 John 2:19).

¹Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rom 8:1

By a fully sufficient sacrifice:

¹⁰By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹²but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, ¹³waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. Heb 10:10-14

Resulting in good works:

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:28-29

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared the following which the RCC maintains today.

Canon 9: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema."

Canon 19: "If anyone says that nothing besides faith is commanded in the gospel, that other things are indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden, but free; or that the ten commandments in no way pertain to Christians, let him be anathema."

Canon 24: "If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema."

Canon 27: "If anyone says that there is no mortal sin except that of unbelief, or that grace once received is not lost through any other sin however grievous and enormous except by that of unbelief, let him be anathema."

Canon 30: "If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema."

Canon 33: "If anyone says that the Catholic doctrine of justification as set forth by the holy council in the present decree, derogates in some respect from the glory of God or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and does not rather illustrate the truth of our faith and no less the glory of God and of Christ Jesus, let him be anathema."

... Roman Catholicism places an undue stress on human works. Catholic doctrine denies that God "justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5) without first making them godly. Good works therefore become the ground of justification. As thousands of former Catholics will testify, Roman Catholic doctrine and liturgy obscure the essential truth that the believer is saved by grace through faith and not by his own works (Eph. 2:8-9). In a simple sense, Catholics genuinely believe they are saved by doing good, confessing sin, and observing ceremonies. "Is Roman Catholicism Biblical?" by John MacArthur on the GTY Website

"... the Roman system ... is not a group of wayward brothers but is an apostate form of Christianity. It is a false religion, it is another religion." John MacArthur on the television broadcast of the John Ankerberg Show titled "Irreconcilable Differences: Catholics, Evangelicals, and the New Quest for Unity" that took place in Ft Lauderdale, Florida between Dr. James Kennedy, Dr. John MacArthur, Dr. R. C. Sproul, and John Ankerberg.

Big Questions

A question to ask is: "Can somebody belong to the RCC and be saved?" The answer is yes, however, they are not saved through the Roman Catholic gospel. The gospel that Rome teaches is a false gospel. A Catholic can get saved through the true gospel at which time they are no longer Catholic because they have accepted a gospel that the RCC condemns.

Another question to ask: "Once saved can a true Christian stay in the RCC?" Again, yes, but it does not make sense Biblically to do so. In addition to the two primary areas we saw today (authority and means of salvation), there are multiple unbiblical Catholic teachings including: Mary, praying to saints, praying for the dead, purgatory, etc. If a person claims to be a true Christian, and yet stays in the Catholic Church, supporting its doctrines, then that would seem to indicate that they still accept Catholicism's false gospel.

References and Additional Resources:

- MacCarthy, James G., "The Gospel According to Rome"
- Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry Website, carm.org/catholic.htm
- Catechism of the Catholic Church Second Edition sborromeo.org/ccc.htm

Transubstantiation: For a study on the Catholic Church's teaching on transubstantiation, see: valleybible.net/resources/PositionPapers/Lord'sSupper.shtml

Mary: For a summary of the Catholic Church's teaching on Mary, see: carm.org/catholic/mary.htm

Table: Biblical/Historical Christianity Summary

Point of Comparison	Biblical / Historical Christianity
Source of Authority	The Bible, composed of the 39 OT books and the 27 NT books, constitutes God’s only written revelation to mankind. It is the inspired, verbal (extending to the very words), plenary (including all of the words), infallible (trustworthy), inerrant in the original manuscripts word of God. The Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice. (Matt 5:18; 22:31-32; Gal 3:16; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21)
Nature of God	There is one God (Deut. 6:4). He is Creator and Lord of everything that exists (Gen 1-3). He is infinite (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:28), transcendent (yet personal), eternal (Gen 21:33; Psa 90:2), unchangeable (James 1:17), omnipresent (Psa 139:7-12), sovereign (Eph 1), omniscient (Matt 11:21), and omnipotent (Rev 19:6). He eternally exists as Triune God: three persons – Father (John 6:27, Eph 4:6), Son (Col 1:16-19; Heb 1:8), and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) – each equal, having the same attributes, and are equally worthy of adoration, worship, and faith.
Person and Work of Jesus	Jesus, the Christ, is the eternal, uncreated second person of the Trinity. He was eternally one with the Father and incarnated supernaturally (John 1:1-12; Matt 1:18-25). He is the eternal God-man. In the incarnation Jesus surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence (Phil 2:5-8; Col 1:16-19). Jesus’ birth, sinless life, death, and resurrection are literal, historical events. Jesus willingly died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin (John 10:15; 3:16; Rom 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Pet 2:24). The resurrection of Jesus confirmed His deity and proved that God had accepted His atoning sacrifice (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10). Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5) – the only way to the Father (means of salvation) (John 14:6).
Nature of Man	God created mankind in His image and likeness – sinless, with intelligence, self-consciousness, and self-determination (Gen 2:7; 15-25; 1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9). By their free will, mankind chose to sin against God and are therefore under the condemnation of physical and spiritual death (eternal separation from their creator) (Gen 3; Rom 3:23; Isa 59:1-2). The corruption of sin extends to every aspect of our being (Rom. 1:18–3:20) including intellect (2 Cor. 4:4), conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), will (Rom. 1:28), and heart (Eph. 4:18). All people are therefore unable to enter into a personal relationship with God on their own initiative (Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3).
Means of Salvation	Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19). Forgiveness of sins (Col 2:13-14) is a free gift (Eph 2:8-9) that is given to those that repent from their sins (Heb 6:1) and exercise faith (John 3:16) in Jesus as Lord and Savior. No pre-forgiveness work is required (i.e. baptism, good deeds, obeying commandments, going to church, giving money, praying, doing penance, surrendering to an organization, etc.).

The Seven Roman Catholic Sacraments from The Moody Handbook of Theology, Paul P. Enns

Sacrament	Procedure	Significance	Vatican II Emphasis
Baptism	Priest performs the rite on infants.	Produces rebirth, “infant Christian.” Necessary for salvation. Frees one from original sin and guilt. Unites one to Christ and the church.	Baptism to receive greater emphasis. Convert to receive instruction beforehand. Illustrates commitment to Christ. Emphasizes unity of all members in Christ.
Confirmation	Bishop lays hands on person whereby they receive the Holy Spirit.	Necessary sequence after baptism. With baptism, part of the “Sacrament of initiation.” Person receives the Holy Spirit, bringing on to maturity and dedication.	Endeavor to unite baptism and confirmation as one act of initiation. Separating the two sacraments suggests there are “degrees of membership in church.”
Eucharist	Priest celebrates Mass. Upon pronouncing, “This is my body” bread and wine turn to body and blood of Christ.	Mass is ongoing sacrifice of Christ. Same as Calvary except Mass is unbloody. In Mass, Christ offers atonement for sin. Participant receives forgiveness from venial sins. Eating bread is eating Christ.	Frequent participation encouraged to increase “union with Christ.” Ceremony now involves lay people. Shorter, simpler ceremony; more use of Scripture.
Confession (Penance)	Three steps: 1. Sorrow for sin. 2. Oral confession to priest. 3. Absolution of sins by priest.	Having confessed all known sins to priest, and stated intention not to sin in the future, the adherent receives absolution from sins by priest.	New view of sin: distorted personal relationship and motives. Allows for general confession and absolution. General confession performed in service of singing, Scripture, prayer, sermon, self-examination, confession, absolution.
Holy Orders	Ordination to office: bishop, priest, deacon. As successor to the apostles, bishop ordains priest.	Confers on recipient power to sanctify others. Priest receives power to offer body and blood of Christ and to remit sins. Priest mediates between God and men as Christ mediated between God and men.	Greater involvement of lay people in ministry. Lay people to develop/use gifts in church. Reduced distinction between priest and people. Priest considered “brother among brothers.”
Marriage	Vows are exchanged in presence of a priest.	Sign of union of Christ and church. Indissoluble because marriage of Christ and church is indissoluble.	Marriage is not just for procreation. Greater emphasis on love in marriage. Mass permitted at weddings with baptized non-Catholics.
Anointing the Sick	Bishop consecrates oil. Person near death anointed by priest.	Removes infirmity and obstacles left by sin, which prevent soul from glory. Prepares people for death by making them like the risen Christ. Prepares soul for eternity.	Broadened usage: changed from “extreme unction” to “anointing the sick.” Used to strengthen/heal body and soul. Sick person shares in readings, prayers.