

# CHAPTER XIII

## The Roman Catholic

### YOUR COMMON GROUND

As believers there are some doctrines we do have in common (at least in part) with the Roman Catholic. However, Roman Catholic doctrines vary from decade to decade and from country to country.

**Below are some doctrines you can use to establish some rapport with the Roman Catholic:**

1. The Bible is God's Word. (Although they interpret it by the dictates of the Pope and their tradition.)
2. Jesus is God. (Although they elevate the Pope and Mary to heights of glory belonging only to Christ.)
3. Man needs a Saviour. (Although they don't believe Jesus alone can save man through man's faith in His payment for all their sin on the cross.)
4. There is a heaven and a hell. (Although they also believe in limbo and purgatory, which are not taught in the Scriptures . . . and they do not teach the difference between going to heaven or hell is FAITH.)

### GRACE and WORKS

The main issue, the constant issue in witnessing to Roman Catholics, is grace and works. The Church has set up myriads of rites, rituals, and rules which its subjects (and I use the word advisedly) must follow if they are to have any hopes of reaching heaven someday (maybe even centuries after they die).

It is amazing but true that when a group is "off" on grace and works, almost every other doctrine it holds is also affected by the poison. As God said in Galatians 5:9, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

There might be a time when you are witnessing to a Roman Catholic and think you have just gotten the plan of salvation really ACROSS to the person. But then he will make a comment or ask a question that will tell you right away that he really doesn't understand salvation is by faith and not of works.

The reason he doesn't understand the gospel is because teaching after teaching has been drilled into his head ever since he was a tiny child that salvation is not by faith alone, and that many more things than just faith are required of the person wanting to go to heaven.

From every side the error is brought in, and sometimes the reasons behind the doctrines are subtle—subtle with the cunning and wickedness of Satan. And again we warn you, as Paul warned those in his care, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." And, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and NOT AFTER CHRIST" (II Cor. 11:3; Col. 2:8).

The Catholics' loud claims that the Church was built upon Peter . . . the adoration of saints . . . the exaltation of Mary . . . if Christ had brothers . . . confession to the priest . . . the rosary . . . **YOU COULD ARGUE ALL DAY AND NIGHT WITH A CATHOLIC ABOUT THESE THINGS AND YET NEVER LEAD HIM TO KNOW CHRIST AS HIS SAVIOUR!**

If you have been born again, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you and enlightening your mind with a clear understanding of Scripture on all these things . . . but the person who has been brought up in the Catholic Church is probably NOT born again, and so does NOT have the benefit of the Holy Spirit teaching him DETAILS in the Word of God (even if they are important details).

What is the Holy Spirit busy convincing the world of? John 16:8-11 teaches us the Holy Spirit is convincing the world of sin, that they lack righteousness, and that judgment is coming. And why are they being convinced of sin? Because they do not BELIEVE on Christ as their Saviour ( 16:9).

If you want to do your witnessing in COOPERATION with what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in the lives of unbelievers . . . speak about the GOSPEL . . . how the person can be saved . . . that salvation is a gift of God received by faith . . . and leave the OTHER QUESTIONS to be answered (as much as possible) AFTER the person is saved!

## **JESUS PAID FOR ALL SIN**

In the Roman Catholic doctrine, sin is compartmentalized. There is venial sin which the Baltimore Catechism No. 3 defines this way: “What is venial sin? Venial sin is a less serious offense against the law of God, which does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, and which can be pardoned even without sacramental confession.”

There is also, in the Catholic doctrine, mortal sin. “What is mortal sin? Mortal sin is a grievous offense against the law of God. Why is this sin called mortal? This sin is called mortal, or deadly, because it deprives the sinner of sanctifying grace, the supernatural life of the soul. Besides depriving the sinner of sanctifying grace, what else does mortal sin do to the soul? Besides depriving the sinner of sanctifying grace, mortal sin makes the soul an enemy of God, takes away the merit of all of its good actions, deprives it of the right to everlasting happiness in heaven, and makes it deserving of everlasting punishment in hell.”

The Catholic Church also recognizes Adamic sin, that is, the sin or sin nature which man inherits from Adam. It is for the Adamic sin that Christ supposedly died. You must show the Catholic that Jesus Christ has completely paid the full price for all of his sin.

First, show from Scripture that all sin is mortal, or deadly (James 2:10; Rom. 6:23). Second, use Scripture to show that all sin—no matter how one classifies it—has been paid for by Christ (Heb. 1:3; I Pet. 2:24; 3:18; I John 2:2).

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from ALL things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39).

Even keeping the commandments would not “justify you from all things.” In the first place, no one has kept them. In the second place, keeping the commandments still wouldn’t make you perfect. Hebrews 7:19 says, “For the law made NOTHING perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did (Jesus, v. 22); by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

JESUS is the only way to heaven. “Jesus saith unto him, I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” Salvation is not in a church. It is not in the Mormon church. It is not in the Protestant church. It is not in the Roman Catholic church. Salvation is in a Person. Salvation is in Jesus. “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1: 17).

## **HOW CAN WE BE CLEANSED OF SIN?**

**When a Roman Catholic sins, he is supposed to do several things:**

- (1) Go to the priest and confess his sin.
- (2) Receive from the priest the penance he is to do, and go home and do it. (This often consists of reciting a certain number of “rosaries,” “Lord’s Prayers,” etc. )
- (3) Go to Mass.
- (4) Be arranging for people to pray for his soul after he dies, so his soul can be released from purgatory in time.

To a person who has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, God says of his sins: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you ALL TRESPASSES; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross” (Col. 2:13, 14).

The Christian does not need another offering (Mass) for his sins. “For by ONE offering, He (Christ) hath perfected FOREVER them that are sanctified (made pure and holy)” (Heb. 10:14). “Now where remission of these is, there is NO MORE OFFERING FOR SIN” (Heb. 10:18).

The Roman Catholic is forever trying to re-crucify Christ . . . all in vain. Christ’s ONE death on the cross paid for ALL sin of ALL people for ALL time for EVERYONE who would receive that payment by faith.

## **WHEN THE PRIEST OFFERS THE SACRIFICE OF MASS**

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can NEVER take away sins” (Heb. 10:11).

Whatever the Catholic might think the sacrifice of Mass can do for him, ONE THING we know it can NOT do. IT CAN NOT TAKE AWAY SINS!

It is God’s will that the sacrifice of Christ would pay for all sin, and that those who would receive that payment would be made pure and holy in God’s eyes forever. “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

The Catholic Church teaches that Mass is the sacrifice of Christ OVER AGAIN for sins. But Romans 6: 9 says, “KNOWING that Christ being raised from the dead DIETH NO MORE...”

The problem with the Catholic is that he doesn’t really believe Christ paid for ALL his sin. And yet the Bible is very clear, “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from ALL iniquity . . .” (Titus 2:14).

This is why it is a problem of grace and works. God says salvation is by grace. The Catholic will not deny this. But at the same time he believes he must follow rituals and rules to make this grace of God effective on his behalf. And this is unscriptural. What verse shows that if salvation is of grace, then it cannot be of works as well? I hope you said, “Romans 11:6.”

Do you see that what the Catholic needs most, then, is for you to go over the plan of salvation with him, simply and with Scripture, showing him that THE BIBLE says salvation is “by grace through faith”? It might take a long time for the “light to break through.” But be patient. Remember, his parents, his teachers, his priest, even the Pope, have been teaching him contrary to the Word of God on this subject of salvation all of his life.

It is only when the Catholic seems REALLY bothered by some other question that you should spend any length of time on anything other than salvation itself, or after he is saved.

### **But for your own information, the following are some errors in the Roman Catholic theology and the correct teachings from Scripture.**

1. The Roman Catholic worships Christ, but worships Him in vain. “But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). See also Galatians 5 :1-4.

2. They teach that Peter was the first Pope and that the Popes are to exercise authority over the people. However, this is contrary to what Peter himself expressed in Scripture. “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also AN ELDER (not one Pope, but one among many elders), and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: FEED the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, NOT BY CONSTRAINT, but willingly; NOT FOR FILTHY LUCRE, but of a ready mind; NEITHER AS BEING LORDS over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (I Peter 5 : 1-3 ).

The Bible never teaches that the spiritual leader of the flock is to be the “boss.” The leader is to give positive leadership, yes, but not to try to play “God” in people’s lives.

Scripture is full of evidence that the true spiritual leader will be a SERVANT of the people rather than some boss.

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves YOUR SERVANTS for Jesus’ sake” (II Cor. 4:5).

Jesus had much to say along this line. “But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

“But so shall it NOT be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your MINISTER. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be SERVANT of all.

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).

If you study much of the history of the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy, you will see the magnitude of their error in exercising “lordship” over the flock.

**3.** Matthew 23: 9 says, “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.” The Catholics make a great mistake in that they demand reverence of human beings. Only God should be worshipped. Other worship constitutes idolatry.

**4.** Veneration of Mary and the “Saints.” Scripture says of Mary, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). Mary was a wonderful, godly woman. But Mary, like everyone, was still a sinner (Rom. 3:23). She herself acknowledged God as her SAVIOUR, “And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46, 47). A person who isn’t a sinner doesn’t need salvation, and thus doesn’t have a Saviour.

Scripture teaches that all believers are saints. The word has the meaning of “pure and holy ones.” All those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour are “pure and holy” through the righteousness God gives to them (I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:21; etc.). The Apostles referred to the whole group of Christians as “saints” (Eph. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; etc.), and not just to those in a select group. God makes a person a saint; man does not. God points out the person as a saint; man does not. God sets us the conditions of being a saint; man does not . . . and neither does the Roman Catholic Church.

**5.** The Pope, the priest, Mary, the saints . . . none of these can mediate between God and man. “For there is one God, and ONE MEDIATOR between God and men, the man CHRIST JESUS” (I Tim. 2:5). The believer is invited to come straight to the Lord, through Jesus, in time of need.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come BOLDLY UNTO THE THRONE OF GRACE, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19, 20).

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand . . .” (Rom. 5:1, 2).

**6.** Whom should we confess our sins to? The Catholic Church says we should confess them to the priest. The Bible says only God can forgive sins, and that we should confess our sins to Jesus, because He is our advocate—He is our intercessor.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness . . . and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 1:9; 2:1). Our advocate is not Mary, nor the priest . . . our advocate is Jesus!

7. Purgatory is not mentioned in the Bible. There is no “place of cleansing” other than the blood of Jesus Christ. I John 1:7 says “. . . the BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

One of the things that caused Martin Luther to speak up against the Roman Catholic Church and its practices regarding the sale of indulgences was remarks made like, “The moment you hear your money drop in the box, the soul of your mother will jump out of purgatory,” by Tetzl, a Dominican Friar ( The Church in History, by B. K. Kuiper, page 160). Indulgences were sold to people who went to the priest for penance, and who would rather pay a sum of money to the Church than do some other form of penalty or satisfaction for their sin. In time, indulgences were also sold to those who were trying to help the soul of a departed one to go from purgatory to heaven. The people found it easier to pay a sum of money for the soul of a dear one than to spend all the time otherwise required for them to pray for them. This system pleased the Church very much, as it gave them an amazingly large source of revenue. It is said that the St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome was built through the sale of these indulgences.

This whole concept is so out of keeping with Scripture! “Forasmuch as ye KNOW that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the PRECIOUS BLOOD of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Peter 1:18, 19).

“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the GIFT OF GOD may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20).

It is not within the power of human beings to in any way aid in the redemption of another person. (You cannot even redeem your own soul, for that matter.)

“None of them can by ANY MEANS redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psalm 49:7).

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son . . .” (Ezekiel 18:20).

The Bible teaches that if a person is lost, he goes to hell. If a person is saved, he goes to be with the Lord in heaven. There is no such thing as purgatory. “. . . to depart, and to be with Christ . . .” (Phil. 1:23). “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be PRESENT WITH THE LORD” (II Cor. 5:8). “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the HEAVENS” (II Cor. 5:1).

Once a person has received Christ as his Saviour, he does not have to worry about being condemned for his sin. Punished on earth, and without much reward in heaven, yes . . . but condemned to purgatory for a time, or to hell for eternity . . . NO!

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, and shall NOT come into condemnation: but is PASSED from death unto life” (John 5:24).

If there were such a place as purgatory, Jesus certainly left it out of His remarks. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” If the thief went to purgatory, then Jesus was a liar.

8. The Catholics say Mary remained a virgin all her life, and that Christ had no flesh and blood sisters or brothers. (He did have half-brothers and sisters, as Joseph was not the father of Christ. ) “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the BROTHER of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his SISTERS here with us?” (Mark 6:3)

9. “Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats.” Is this doctrine of the Catholic Church from the Bible . . . from the Lord?

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of DEVILS, SPEAKING LIES in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron: forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which

God hath created to be RECEIVED with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (I Tim. 4:1-3).

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days” (Col. 2:16). “Let no man beguile (defraud) you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind . . . Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, WHY, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Col. 2: 18, 20-23).

The Scofield Reference Bible makes the notation in regard to this verse, “Which do not really honour God, but only satisfy the flesh (i.e., by creating a reputation for superior sanctity) .”

The Catholic system of self-imposed worship and self humiliation and degradation, thinking that somehow this would please God, is actually contrary to Scripture, as human logic often is.

Christ said in Matt. 9:13, “. . . I will have MERCY, and NOT SACRIFICE: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (to change their minds).”

It is the sacrifice of Christ that God looks at for our salvation, not any sacrifice we might make for Him. However, after we are saved, we are invited to serve the Lord—but this is our REASONABLE service, rather than a sacrifice. It is to our benefit, both now and later.

**10.** The Catholic Church teaches that the “true church” (their church) is built upon Peter, using Matthew 16:18 as its textual basis for this claim.

Upon examination of this passage in Matthew 16, however, we do not find this teaching at all. Verses 13-16 record Jesus asking His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” Simon Peter gives the correct answer, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter knew Christ was God . . . the Son of God.

In verse 17 Jesus said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona (son of Jonas): for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” Jesus is saying that while He is the Son of God, Peter is the son of man.

Verse 18, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (petros), and upon this Rock (Petra) I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Jesus is saying, “Peter, you are a little stone, a small pebble. Upon this big Rock, this boulder (Christ) I will build My church.”

I Cor. 3:11, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST”—not Peter. Jesus is the foundation upon which the true church is built.

Eph. 2: 20, “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF being the CHIEF CORNER STONE.”

Even Peter himself speaks of believers as “stones,” but of Christ as the “CHIEF CORNER STONE” (I Pet. 2: 4-8). Also see Acts 4:11.

**11.** The Catholic Church teaches water baptism is necessary for salvation. Please refer to Chapter Nine which covers this thoroughly.

The above eleven points, as we mentioned before, should rarely, if at all, be brought up during your presentation of the gospel to a Roman Catholic. If you do feel it is imperative to go into something along those lines for some reason, please do so with genuine love and patience. Remember, the person you are witnessing to did not make up these doctrines. Usually he believes them simply because this is what he has been taught, and he has not searched the Scriptures for himself, “whether those things were so.”

If you really want to win Catholics (or anybody, for that matter) to the Lord . . . *stay with the gospel* and the simple verses that make the plan of salvation clear and understandable to the lost, such as John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Acts 16:31.

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