

A Study of Denominations

3. The Roman Catholic Church

In the late 1980s I was a campus minister in Nebraska. One evening two campus pastors and I sponsored a question and answer time with the college students. They could ask any question they wanted. As we came to the end of the evening a tall, blonde-headed young man from back of the room asked, “What’s the bottom line, how are we saved?” After all is said and done this is one of the most profound questions any of us can ask. The UCC pastor gave a philosophical answer saying that salvation was a matter of faith and that there are many “paths” of faith that lead to salvation. Next, the Catholic priest said that faith was based on love. If we show love, we will be saved. He recalled an uncle who had never been baptized and wanted nothing to do with the church. But he was known to be a very loving man, and therefore he was sure that he was saved. Now it was my turn. Respectfully I had to disagree with my two friends. If salvation was simply based on faith in whatever, or if it was based on love, there really was no need for Jesus. Before Jesus came there were many different faiths. People could have followed them to be saved. The same can be said of love. Noah was a very loving man. So were Abraham and David. If love is the key to salvation, then Jesus really isn’t necessary except to serve as an example. But Jesus came anyway. He didn’t come to provide another among many valid “paths” of faith. He didn’t come to be an example of love. He came to be love and to give His life as a ransom for our love-lacking souls. The answer to the student’s question has always been: Repentance of sin and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin.



1. What is the source of doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church? Doctrine is based on the inspired Scriptures and on the inspired _____. See John 14.26.
2. What are some _____ Biblical teachings that are based on tradition?

- A. Purgatory _____
- B. Great Clergy Divorce _____
- C. Sale of Indulgences _____
- D. Cup Denied to Laymen _____
- E. Immaculate Conception _____
- F. Papal Infallibility _____
- G. Assumption of Mary _____
- F. Mary Co-redemtrix _____

3. I’ve heard that the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church have come together on a _____ understanding of the doctrine of justification?
4. Why is there such a division over the greatest question of all – How a person is saved?
 - A. The Problem of _____
 - B. The Unsettled _____ (St. Augustine & St. Thomas)
 - C. Martin Luther’s _____
 - D. The heart of the issue –

If you teach that people are saved by grace alone through faith alone they will...

If you teach that people are saved by faith and works they will...

5. Is the Pope the anti-Christ? See Matthew 16.18; Luke 20.17; Acts 4.11
6. What are the _____ of the anti-Christ?
 - A. First, the Scriptures speak of various anti-Christian forces... Da 11:36-38; Mt 24:22-25; 1 Ti 4:1-3; 2 Ti 3:1-9; 1 Jn 2:18-23; 1 Jn 4:1-6; 2 Jn 7; 2 Th 2:1-12, compare also 13-17.
 - B. Second, the Scriptures also speak of a particular person who specifically opposes God. The signs of this person are...
 1. He “sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Th 2:4).
 2. He opposes and exalts himself over God (2 Thessalonians 2.4)
 3. He uses deception, signs and wonders against the truth of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2.10-11).

We thereby affirm that we identify this “Antichrist” with the Papacy as it is known to us today, which shall, as 2 Thessalonians 2:8 states, continue to the end of time, whatever form or guise it may take. This neither means nor implies a blanket condemnation of all members of the Roman Catholic Church, for despite all the errors taught in that church the Word of God is still heard there, and that Word is an effectual Word. Isa 55:10, 11; cf. Apology XXIV, 98, cited above under II.

7. How _____ is the Roman Catholic Church?

The Church has long allowed contradictory and controversial teachings to stand. For example the theory of evolution, historical criticism of the Bible, some forms of universalism, and Mary as Co-redemtrix are taught.

The Roman Catholic Church uses complicated explanations for this. They distinguish between unalterable “truths” and “changeable conceptions” in them. Diverse theological formulations are often considered mutually complimentary rather than conflicting (Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, 17).

Roman Catholicism

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1. What is the source of doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church? Doctrine is based on the inspired Scriptures and on the inspired tradition. See John 14.26.

2. What are some extra Biblical teachings that are based on tradition?

- A. Purgatory (593)
- B. Great Clergy Divorce (1075)
- C. Sale of Indulgences (1190)
- D. Cup Denied to Laymen (1415)
- E. Immaculate Conception (1854)
- F. Papal Infallibility (1870)
- G Assumption of Mary (1950)
- F. Mary Co-redemtrix _____?

3. I’ve heard that the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church have come together on a common understanding of the doctrine of justification?

4. Why is there such a division over the greatest question of all – How a person is saved?

- A. The Problem of Pelegius
- B. The Unsettled Question (St. Augustine & St. Thomas)
- C. Martin Luther’s “Sola”
- D. The heart of the issue –

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7. How unified is the Roman Catholic Church?

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