

**Christian worldview:**  
Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1

Mike Gendron, a former catholic and the founder of Proclaiming the Gospel ministries clarifies some of the major differences between the teaching of the RCC and the Bible:

<b>The Pope and his church teach...</b>	<b>Jesus and His Word teach...</b>
You are saved by faith plus works	You are saved by faith and not by works (Eph. 2:8-9)
Obedience to the commandments is a condition for salvation	All who rely on observing the law are under a curse (Gal. 3:10)
Salvation is a process from baptism through purgatory	Salvation occurs at the moment you believe the Gospel (Eph. 1:13)
Purgatory purifies sin	Jesus purifies sin (Hebrews 1:3)
You are condemned if you claim to be saved	You can know for sure you are saved (1 John 5:13)
The sacrifice of Jesus continues in daily Mass	The sacrifice of Jesus is finished (John 19:30)

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Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1

**A (Very) Brief Explanation: Why are there Catholics and Protestants?**

by Marc Minter

**First, it is complicated, but Catholics have no \_\_\_\_\_ claim on history.**

Simply put, the Roman Catholic Church as it is today, in its doctrines and in its administration, did not exist until (at the earliest) the year 1215 AD. The Fourth Lateran Council ratified some of the teachings and most of the organizational forms that are *distinctive of* and *essential to* Roman Catholicism today.<sup>1</sup> But it was not until the Council of Trent, which met sporadically from 1545 to 1563 that the main doctrines which separate Rome from Protestants were clearly articulated and ratified.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, regardless of what my Roman Catholic friends might say, the Roman Church is not the oldest and most united church. It has a complicated past, and it has no unique claim on the Apostles or early Christians.

**Second, Catholics and Protestants alike see the need for \_\_\_\_\_ in the late Middle Ages.**

Before and during the 1500s, there were many Christians within the Roman Church who were calling for reform. At least as early as the 1300s, with John Wycliffe in England in and Jan Hus in Bohemia (as well as many others), good Roman Catholics were writing and preaching and working for reforms within the Roman Catholic Church. By all observers, including Roman Catholics, Western Christianity had become so abusive and scandalous that something had to change.

Many historians look back and see that the leadership of the Roman Church was unwilling to change, so Catholic priests, local friars, and Church theologians started protesting. The quintessential moment which seems to capture the scene in the early 1500s was that evening of October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther (a German monk, Catholic priest, and promising theologian) nailed his invitation to scholarly debate on the castle-church door in Wittenberg. The nailing of the 95 theses was a historic moment, but there were others like it happening all over Europe.

Zwingli, in Zurich, encouraged his congregation to eat meat during a Roman fasting day. English men and women were sharing copies of Wycliffe's translation of the Latin Bible, and they were illegally memorizing passages to recite to one another so that they might all hear the Bible in their own language. Spain and France were killing and exiling those who taught against Rome, and that's how John Calvin (a Frenchman) ended up in Geneva. Calvin wrote the first comprehensive systematic theology textbook (from a historic Christian and Protestant perspective) for instructing new Christians.

All of this came to a head when Rome called a council to deal once-and-for-all with the reformers. This was the notorious Council of Trent.

**Christian worldview:**  
Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1

**Third, Rome formally and officially \_\_\_\_\_ all Protestants.**

It is a historical and present fact that the Roman Catholic Church has formally set itself against Protestants, and it has never pulled back from that clear and official statement. At the Council of Trent, Rome condemned to hell anyone who believes some of the most fundamental doctrines among all Protestants. The canons or decrees of Trent anathematize anyone who believes that the Bible is the chief authority over all tradition and papal decrees. They also eternally condemned anyone who believes that sinners are justified by grace alone through faith alone in the person and work of Christ.

These statements are clear, they are recorded for anyone to see in the records of that council, and they are repeated in the Roman Catholic Catechism that is still used by Rome today. It seems to me that Protestants and Roman Catholics can indeed be friends today. But it also seems to me that we must recognize the differences between Catholics and Protestants are not mere preference nor are they minor. These two are divided on essential matters, and it is unloving and inconsiderate to pretend otherwise.

**The Council of \_\_\_\_\_ was held in 3 parts from 1545 to 1563.**

Prompted by the Reformation, the Council of Trent responded emphatically to the issues at hand and enacted the formal Roman Catholic reply to the doctrinal challenges of the Protestants. It thus represents the official adjudication of many questions about which there had been continuing ambiguity throughout the early church and the Middle Ages.

**Christian worldview:**  
Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1

**The Reformation**

Martin Luther was the spark that started the most significant spiritual event in the last 500 years. On October 31, 1517, he nailed 95 Theses to the Wittenberg Castle church's door in Germany. These 95 theses were a list of questions and propositions that he offered for debate with the Roman Catholic Church. Luther's 95 Theses were also known as the "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences."

**The two pivotal issues, the leading causes for protesting the Roman Catholic Church, were the debate over the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ by faith alone.**

Luther proposed that the Bible alone has authority over the church and the conscience of Christians. The Roman Catholic Church elevated the church's tradition over the Bible as the manner in which God revealed Himself.

The second primary issue of the reformation is that according to the Bible, salvation is by faith alone. The reformers, men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Huldrych Zwingli, Theodore Beza, and others, proposed that the Bible teaches that humanity is justified before God by faith alone. Though this might sound normal to you, the Roman Catholic Church condemned this teaching and still rejects it today.

As a matter of fact, the Holy Roman Emperor declared Luther's teaching a "Cesspool of heresies" in 1521. Later in 1534, John Calvin delivered a speech in which he called for the church to return to the pure Gospel of the New Testament. His speech was burned, and the church sought to have him killed.

From this point in history, the protest of the reformers birthed the Anglican Church in England, the Scottish Reformed Church, and in general, what we now call Protestantism. These are the churches and denominations that rose in rejection of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the 17th Century, the reformation made its way to the new world through the Pilgrims. Using the Geneva Bible, the reformation teachings were at the heart of the Puritans who settled the colonies that came to be known as the United States of America. Reformation theology was the dominant form of teaching and theology until the influence of what we will call Pietism and Finneyism. Finney references the movement of revivalism that spread through America following the teaching and influence of Charles Finney.

The Reformation movement is a movement back to the Bible. This is the heart of the reformers and should be at the heart of protestant churches. To help clarify and communicate what the Bible says concerning salvation, the early reformers spoke of what we now call the Five Solas.

**Christian worldview:  
Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1**

**The Five Solas**

***Salvation is by God's grace alone (Sola Gratia), on Christ alone (Solus Christus), received through faith alone (Sola Fide), to the glory of God alone (Sola Deo Gloria), with Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura) as the only, final, decisive, authority on truth.***

**Sola \_\_\_\_\_ (Scripture Alone)**

**The Bible is our highest authority in the church and the life of a believer.**

**Sola \_\_\_\_\_ (Faith Alone) and Sola \_\_\_\_\_ (Grace Alone)**

**We are saved solely through faith in Jesus Christ because of God's grace and Christ's merit alone. We are not saved by our merits or declared righteous by our good works. God grants salvation, not because of the good things we do and despite our sin.**

**Solus \_\_\_\_\_**

**God has given the ultimate revelation of himself to us by sending Jesus Christ, Colossians 1:15. Only through God's gracious self-revelation in Jesus do we come to a saving and transforming knowledge of God.**

**Soli Deo \_\_\_\_\_ (The Glory of God Alone)**

**Glory belongs to God alone. God's glory is the central motivation for salvation, not improving people's lives—though that is a wonderful by-product. God is not a means to an end—he is the means and the end.**

## **9 Things You Should Know About the Council of Trent (adapted)**

by Joe Carter

Yesterday marked the 450th anniversary of the closing of the Council of Trent, one of the most significant series of meetings in Christian history. Here are nine things evangelicals should know about the Council and the decrees that it issued:

### **The Council of Trent was convened to \_\_\_\_\_ the beliefs of Protestants.**

The Council of Trent was the most important movement of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church's first significant reply to the growing Protestants Reformation. The primary purpose of the council was to \_\_\_\_\_ and refute the beliefs of the \_\_\_\_\_, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, and also to make the set of beliefs in Catholicism even clearer.

Approximately forty clergymen, mainly Catholic bishops, were in attendance during the twenty-five times over the next eighteen years that the Council convened.

### **The RCC condemned justification by faith alone as \_\_\_\_\_.**

Protestants endorse justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) apart from anything (including good works), a position the Catholic Church condemned as heresy. During the the sixth session, the Council issued a decree saying that, **"If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema."**

### **The RCC condemned anyone who rejects the \_\_\_\_\_**

The Protestant Reformers rejected the Apocrypha as part of the biblical canon. (The term Apocrypha (Gr., hidden) is a collection of ancient Jewish writings and is the title given to these books, which were written between 300 and 30 B.C., in the era between the Old and New Testaments.) During the the fourth session, the Council issued a decree damning anyone who rejected these books:

**... if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.**

Many doctrines unique to Catholicism, such as the teachings of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and salvation by works, are found in these books.

**Christian worldview:**  
Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1

**The RCC affirmed the doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_**

During the Protestant Reformation, the doctrine of transubstantiation was heavily criticized as an Aristotelian “pseudophilosophy.” The 13th session reaffirmed and defined transubstantiation as **“that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood – the species only of the bread and wine remaining – which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation.”**

**The RCC rejected the Scriptures as the \_\_\_\_\_ authority of the church.**

Protestants claimed that the only source and norm for the Christian faith was Holy Scripture (the canonical Bible without the Apocrypha). The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* was rejected at Trent. The Council affirmed two sources of special revelation: Holy Scripture (e.g., all the books included in the Latin Vulgate version) and traditions of the church (including the “unwritten traditions”).

**The RCC affirmed \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_**

In Catholic theology, an indulgence is a remission of temporal punishment due to sin, the guilt of which has been forgiven. Under Catholic teaching, every sin must be purified either here on earth or after death in a state called purgatory. The selling of indulgences was not part of official Catholic teaching, though in Martin Luther’s era, the practice had become common. (Luther was appalled by the sermon of an indulgence vendor named John Tetzel who said, “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”) The Council called for the reform of the practice, yet damned those who “say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.”

In Catholic theology, purgatory is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who denied yet were not free from “venial” sins (a lesser sin that does not result in a complete separation from God and eternal damnation in hell). The council affirmed the doctrine of purgatory and damned anyone who claimed “that after the grace of justification has been received the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out for any repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be paid.”

**The RCC clarified positions on \_\_\_\_\_**

In the 24th session, the council issued decrees on marriage which affirmed the excellence of celibacy, condemned concubinage, and made the validity of marriage dependent upon the wedding taking place before a priest and two witnesses. In the case of a divorce, the right of the innocent party to marry again was denied so long as the other party was alive, even if the other party had committed adultery.

**Christian worldview:**  
Roman Catholicism & Protestantism pt. 1

**The RCC corrected issues with the \_\_\_\_\_**

At the request of Pope Gregory XIII, the Council approved a plan to correct the errors to the Julian calendar that would allow for a more consistent and accurate scheduling of the feast of Easter. The reform included reducing the number of leap years in four centuries from 100 to 97. Although Protestant countries in Europe initially refused to adopt the "Gregorian calendar" (also known as the Western or Christian calendar), it eventually became the most widely accepted and used civil calendar in the world.

(Note: The declarations and anathemas of the Council of Trent have never been revoked. The decrees of the Council of Trent are confirmed by both the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the official "Catechism of the Catholic Church" (1992).)