

7 Key Differences Between Roman Catholics and Protestants:

1. The Magisterium

The term “magisterium” refers to the _____ teaching body of the Roman Catholic Church. Dr. Horrell explains, “Usually, it's related to... the large house of cardinals and the leading theologians in the movement; but finally, that all comes under, of course, the pope himself.”

Besides providing a trusted, unified voice to guide Catholics, this body also allows the church to make official pronouncements on contemporary issues which Scripture might not directly address.

Although there is no equivalent to the magisterium for Protestants, it's possible to compare Catholic and Protestant views of the role of tradition.

2. Tradition

While Protestants don't view _____ as equal in authority with the Scriptures, the Roman Catholic Church has a different perspective—one which clearly distinguishes itself from Protestant churches.

As Dr. Horrell notes: “The issue of Sola Scriptura...versus ‘Scripture plus tradition’ is perhaps the fundamental difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism...(what) you're talking about it's a hermeneutic, a way of doing theology.”

While Protestants only view the Scriptures as authoritative, the Catholic Catechism clearly states that Church: “...does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with _____ sentiments of devotion and reverence.”

3. Salvation and Grace

Protestants often express the idea that salvation is by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. This assertion views justification as specific _____ upon which God declares that you are righteous—a point where you enter into the Christian life.

In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church views justification as a _____, dependent on the grace you receive by participating in the Church—which is seen as a repository of saving grace.

Dr. Svigel explains the Catholic perspective: “Grace is treated almost as if it's a substance, something that can be dispensed through various avenues of change and means... You're saved by grace, but how you receive that grace and what that grace does and whether it's a one-time entrance into the Christian life or if it's a constant movement toward salvation—that's really the big difference between Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church.”

4. The Eucharist

When it comes to the Eucharist, which most Protestants call ‘The Lord’s Supper,’ or ‘Communion,’ the Roman Catholic Church holds to the doctrine of transubstantiation—the idea that the edible ritual elements used during the mass _____ become the body and blood of Christ. Dr. Svigel explains:

“At the moment that the priest says, ‘This is my body,’ the invisible, unperceivable essence that... you couldn't see (with) an electron microscope, (is) there in a miracle. It contains the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. And that becomes the spiritual and physical nourishment. As you partake of it, it becomes part of you, transforms you, and makes you more and more righteous.”

In contrast, some Protestants, like Lutherans, hold to perspective called consubstantiation, where Jesus’ body and blood are seen as _____ with the bread and the wine. Martin Luther likened this to the idea of a red-hot iron in a fire—united, but not changed.

Dr. Bock says:

“I like to call it ‘the over, under, around and through’ view. Jesus Christ surrounds the elements. He's spiritually present, but he's not in the elements themselves; the elements don't become the body and blood of Christ.”

Still, other Protestants hold to the memorial view—the idea that you're _____ Jesus’ death. In this understanding, the elements are symbols which remain ontologically unaffected by the ritual.

5. Justification

As previously discussed, protestants view justification as the moment God declares that a guilty person is righteous because of what Christ has done. Sanctification, then, is the _____ of being made more righteous throughout your life.

However, Dr. Horrell notes that Catholics view _____ as both a point and a process: “What the Roman Catholic rejects is that there is an imputed righteousness of Christ to us at the moment of salvation, that we are counted as fully righteous in the sight of God”

6. Priesthood of All Believers

Rather than a vertical structure, Protestants see the church as having a horizontal structure. Dr. Svigel contrasts the role of the Catholic priest with the Protestant idea of the priesthood of all believers:

“That which was reserved just for the magisterium, the ability to bind and loose to forgive and withhold forgiveness through the sacraments and through penance and such, that was just the role of the priest. From Luther on, we have the ability to confess our sins to one another, pronounce forgiveness as the scripture says.”

7. Veneration of the Saints and the Virgin Mary

Roman Catholics see veneration, not as praying to the Saints and the Virgin Mary, but as praying _____ them. This is seen as similar to asking a brother or sister in Christ to pray for you. Dr. Svigel adds that departed saints are also “able to spill over their overabundance of grace to us.” Furthermore, Dr. Horrell notes that the Virgin Mary is seen as “the mother of our Lord, and therefore she is the mother of his body, and his body is the church, so she is the mother of the church. He is the creator of all things. So she is the mother of angels. She is the mother of humanity, as is sometimes said.”

Moreover, the Catholic Church has also called her the Queen of Heaven. Historically, Mary was given a less prominent position in Protestantism as a reaction to this emphasis in the Catholic Church. There is no equivalent to this kind of veneration in Protestantism, as Protestants emphasize direct access to God.

Comparing and Contrasting the RCC & Protestant Views on the Doctrine of Justification

The Roman Catholic View

1. Baptism (with penance) is the instrumental _____ of justification.
2. Justification is by _____.
3. Justification is _____.
4. Justification is based on an _____ righteousness.
5. Justification is by faith plus _____.
6. Justification is by grace and _____.
7. Justification is on the basis of Christ's righteousness and _____ righteousness.
8. Justification can be _____ by mortal sin.
9. Justification may be _____ in purgatory.
10. Justification may be obtained by drawing from the Treasury of _____.
11. Justification is _____. (Relating to priests, or the priesthood)

The Reformation (Protestant) View

1. _____ is the instrumental cause of justification.
2. Justification is by _____.
3. Justification is _____.
4. Justification is based on an _____ (Christ's) righteousness.
5. Justification is by faith _____.
6. Justification is by grace _____.
7. Justification is on the _____ of Christ's righteousness.
8. There is no "_____ sin" for a person who is justified.
9. There is no _____ or need for it.
10. The only _____ is that of Christ alone.
11. Justification is _____ - _____. (Not related to a priest of the priesthood)

Via Watchmen Fellowship

Ecumenism & the Roman Catholic Church:

Ecumenism is the coming together of various religions to gain mutual understanding for the purpose of _____ and joint cooperation. In 1994, many Roman Catholic and Evangelical leaders wrote a document as a response to ecumenical dialogue called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." The purpose of this ecumenical dialogue did not result out of a desire for harmony itself, but to enhance the global missionary effort through joint cooperation.

For many well meaning individual Catholics and Evangelicals, such conversations are the ultimate goal: to help further the name of Jesus throughout the earth. It is not, however, **the ultimate goal given by the official teaching of the RCC. Pope John Paul II explained that "The ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish _____ among all the baptized."**

"Full visible unity" is a reference to the partaking of the Eucharist. John Paul II explains that "visible unity...which is manifested in a real and concrete way, so that the Churches may truly become a sign of that full communion in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church which will be expressed in the common celebration of the Eucharist."

In other words, the unity desired is that Protestants and Orthodox people join the RCC under the headship of the Pope. One of the Vatican II documents also reveals this as the intended outcome of ecumenical dialogues:

"The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time."

Why must Protestants and Orthodox join the RCC to achieve unity?

For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God.