

Double-Minded Part III

In our previous two articles we endeavored to show the emptiness of CRI's attempts to carefully articulate the differences between the Roman Catholic gospel and the Christian gospel. We have been careful to declare the distinctions as they really need to be stated. At the end of the day the Roman Catholic religion needs to be contrasted with Christianity. But CRI misses this mark by portraying the dispute as an in-house struggle between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

As we shall see this falls far short of the mark and ultimately devastates the gospel.

Furthermore CRI lumps Roman Catholicism together with Christianity by building a case that both believe in salvation "by grace" in some sense. We have labored to show that this sort of lumping together can only be done when biblical definitions are either ignored or shattered in favor of ecumenism.

In this article we will enlist the help of CRI to actually prove our case against Rome. We will essentially show you how CRI systematically reveals the lifeless no hope gospel according to Rome. We will also sadly demonstrate to you exactly how CRI annihilates the very foundations of the Christian gospel. CRI does so by maintaining that one can disbelieve the essence of the gospel, construct a contradictory religion, and yet have it still deemed to be Christianity.

We have already specified why it is impossible for CRI to convince us that Roman Catholic theology and doctrine is Christian. Here we shall essentially, by way of analogy, show you how CRI proves to us that 2 plus 2 equals 4 and that this is certain, pure, exact, correct, and true math. However CRI will also tell us if 2 plus 2 equals 5 in the view of others that this too is 'good enough' math but simply less pure, less truthful, less accurate but nevertheless perfectly reliable arithmetic.

We begin this segment by scrutinizing the conclusions CRI arrives at in their attempt to categorize Roman Catholicism as Christian. CRI has to do this while at the same time dealing with the fatal dissimilarities between Roman Catholic doctrine and Christianity. CRI starts out well enough. This is their opening statement. One would think the conversation would be over based upon this one statement of CRI. But CRI will not let it be over and done.

“With all due recognition of the common Augustinian core of salvation by grace, there are some important differences between the Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant views of justification. Unfortunately, the well-intentioned but unsuccessful recent statement, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” lacked precision in these very areas, speaking of a common belief that “we are justified by grace through faith.” What it failed to note, however, is what the Reformation was fought over, namely, that Scripture

teaches, and Protestants affirm, that we are saved by grace through faith alone (*sola fide*). Since this was the heart cry of the Reformation, many evangelicals refuse to sign the statement, believing it would betray the Reformation.” (Emphasis ours)

We have already analyzed CRI’s propensity to make “nebulous grace” the core of salvation. They stay consistent here as well. At the risk of repetition, we would remind the reader that “grace” undefined is grace abused and void of any relationship to the gospel. Also we take note that the battle is once again stated to be between evangelical Protestants and Rome. It should be between Rome and Christianity. This error is a common theme throughout CRI writing.

Now we stand amazed that CRI can state boldly that “Roman Catholics and evangelicals share a common core of beliefs about salvation” on page 1 and on page 7 that “there are important differences between the Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant views of justification.” Evidently the doctrine of justification, according to CRI, does not qualify as part of the common core beliefs about salvation!

The important “difference” with respect to justification, according to CRI, is salvation by grace through faith alone! We must ask the question, “If we reject salvation by grace through faith alone are we not rejecting the Christian gospel?” And Rome, since they do reject salvation by grace through faith alone, are they not rejecting the Christian gospel? And so how can a religion be Christian that rejects the Christian gospel?

Remarkably at this point CRI builds a solid and biblical case for the true Christian gospel. CRI is aware that justification is a declarative act of God wherein the guilty party is declared acquitted based upon the righteous fulfillment of all debts to the law by another. This is forensic justification based upon the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ in the declaration of justification. This status is gained by faith alone. The Roman Catholic religion rejects all of this. As we have seen the Roman Catholic religion has two senses of justification and redefines grace as infused righteousness, etc. So, Rome denies and rejects justification by faith alone. Rome also repudiates that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is the only ground of forensic justification. Hence Rome renounces, and disavows the Christian gospel! Here is the case built by CRI against Rome!

“Turning to the New Testament, the Greek verb translated “to justify” is *dikaioó*. This word is used by Paul in a forensic or legal sense; the sinner is declared to be righteous (cf. Rom. 3–4). As Anthony Hoekema observes, “The opposite of condemnation, however, is not ‘making righteous’ but ‘declaring righteous.’” Therefore, by *dikaioó*, Paul means the “legal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner.” When a person is justified, God pronounces that one acquitted – in advance of the final

judgment. Therefore, “the resulting righteousness is not ethical perfection; it is ‘sinlessness’ in the sense that God no longer counts a man’s sin against him (II Cor. 5:19).”³⁷ Thus we find in the New Testament that “justification is the declarative act of God by which, on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning death, he pronounces believers to have fulfilled all of the requirements of the law which pertain to them” (emphasis in original).”

What is absolutely mind boggling is that Rome repudiates all of the above proof of a biblical definition of justification and salvation. Rome thus renounces the very heart of Christianity. We ask, “What is more important than this when it comes to categorizing an entity as a non-Christian religion?”

CRI sensing that Rome is the polar opposite of what they now affirm about the gospel pounces upon Rome’s concept of merit and grace. Here is their summary.

“Much criticism of the Catholic view of justification revolves around the concept of merit that was elevated by Trent to the status of infallible dogma. While Catholics wish to remind us that the whole doctrine of merit should be viewed in the context of grace, they overlook the fact that Scripture teaches that grace and meritorious works are mutually exclusive (e.g., Rom. 11:6). The New Testament clearly speaks against obtaining salvation (whether justification or sanctification) as a “reward” (i.e., wage) for work done. For the Scriptures insist that gifts cannot be worked for; only wages can (Rom. 4:4–5). Grace means unmerited favor, and reward based on works is merited. Hence, grace and works are no more coherent than is an unmerited merit! Eternal Life Is a Gift That Cannot Be Merited” (Emphasis ours)

CRI informs us that Scripture teaches clearly against Rome’s view of justification, salvation, eternal life, and Rome’s view of works. CRI offers us subtitles like, “Eternal Life Is a Gift That Cannot Be Merited”, and Christians Work from Salvation, Not for It.” CRI articulates with exactness and clarity the slander of Roman Catholic theology. CRI even takes the time to correctly quote the Council of Trent to divulge the true nature of the Roman Catholic gospel. All of this is communicated to us under the general subtitle: “A PROTESTANT CRITIQUE OF TRENT.”

One would think that all of this deserved criticism and exposure of Rome’s defiant rejection of salvation by grace through faith alone would easily put Roman Catholicism in the league of non-Christian religions. But we are reminded of the conclusions expressed in our first article. CRI clearly states that “These divergent views, however, do not warrant classifying Catholicism as a non-Christian religion or cult.”

Defying all reason CRI concludes this section with the following:

“We conclude by noting that Protestants, following the clear biblical distinction between forensic justification and practical sanctification, make the way of salvation much clearer and preserve the doctrine of grace (which Catholics also claim) in a much purer form. For once believers know they have right standing before God (=’s are justified) by faith alone apart from works, then their minds are not cluttered with works they must perform in order to know all their sins are forgiven (past, present, and future) and they are on their way to heaven. While Catholicism acknowledges that there is an initial act of justification (which some even admit includes a forensic act), nevertheless, it also maintains that one must work to faithfully avoid mortal sin in order to achieve final justification before God. Thus, works are ultimately necessary for salvation. But this is contrary to the biblical teaching that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, based on Christ alone. And, despite Catholic protest to the contrary, this is not conducive to the assurance of salvation by which we “know... [we] have eternal life” (1 John 5:13), and by which we are connected to God by His inseparable love (Rom. 8:1, 36-39).” (Emphasis ours)

Before we summarize let us consider what CRI really is saying about the dogma of Roman Catholicism at this critical juncture.

- Protestants (deliberately avoiding the use of the word Christians) merely make the way of salvation much clearer and merely preserve the doctrine of grace in a much purer form.
- The advantage of Protestants is that their minds are not cluttered with works they must perform in order to know all their sins are forgiven.
- Catholics must believe that works are necessary for salvation.
- This is contrary to biblical teaching that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.
- The Catholic view is not conducive to the assurance of salvation.

Bottom line is that CRI gives the impression that despite rank heresy and utter disregard for the grace of God and the foundation of Christianity Roman Catholics are only to envy Protestants because they make salvation clearer and grace clearer! Protestants unlike Catholics do not have minds cluttered with works salvation. Catholic beliefs are contrary to biblical teaching. Catholic beliefs are not conducive (could CRI be more euphemistic?) to the assurance of salvation.

We submit that here in capsule form is a microcosm of all that is wrong with CRI and all other organizations of their ilk. The evangelical world is always subject to scandals of one kind or another. High profile leaders and movements that start strong often fall and bring disgrace to the

gospel of Jesus Christ. Sin is not eliminated from the Body of Christ and the fall-out is sometimes painful to bear. But perhaps the biggest indignity of our day is the scandal of deceit and cowardice fueled by fear and a desire to be accepted broadly. We think that CRI has undermined all things sacred and torn asunder the foundation of Christianity. We think CRI has deliberately encouraged others to close their eyes to their own evidence and turn their back on the obvious conclusions that are right in front of them. This has resulted in an atmosphere whereby the entire gospel of Christianity is relegated to a subjective choosing of one's whim.

With CRI leading the way Christianity is whatever anyone wants it to be. Dispense with faith alone? No problem. Pass over distortions of grace? No worry. Mangle and mutilate the essence of justification? No big deal. Build a bizarre religion based upon eating Jesus who has been transformed into a wafer and selling the whacky lie of purgatory? Relax! Declaring a human being as the Vicar of Christ on earth? Chill out. But most importantly, build your own gospel replete with man-made grace, an army of priests performing voodoo like religious rituals, and duping people out any hope for heaven? Whatever, it's all Christian in the end.

According to CRI all that the Protestant Reformation really did was make the way of salvation much clearer and preserve grace in a much purer form. May God help us! Is this what thousands of Christians gave up their lives for? Call home the missionaries to Italy, Mexico, Central and South America along with Spain and France. Rome is now proclaimed to be OK. Rome simply does not have as pure an understanding of salvation or grace. No problem.

Those who rely on CRI for direction in this matter are stepping into the world of Oz. Despite stating emphatically that Roman Catholicism believes in a works salvation CRI maintains that it is a Christian religion. Could the disgrace be more devastating to the gospel? We think not.

A Note of caution: In reviewing the data presented in these three articles it appears that the fundamental mistake of CRI is to think that "salvation by grace" is the gospel. We have spent significant time on this already. However we caution the reader that the use of the word "grace" and perhaps the word "baptism" in religious circles have become clueless catch phrases used to dumb down and essentially replace biblical Christianity. There are many who are comfortable with religious rituals and mindless ceremonies. When infatuated by such outward religious trappings the fence protecting an honest investigation of the truth from the Bible alone gets higher and higher with each new generation.