

*I am a Christian*

You are a Roman Catholic

So, What is the big Deal?

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## To Start With

I am a Christian and what defines me is my belief system. As a Christian, I am confined to believing certain things about God, Jesus Christ and the Bible which constitute my faith. If I were to believe things which contradict what constitutes a Christian then I could not say; "I am a Christian."

What then is a Christian? A person is a Christian when he/she believes the Gospel of God, Jesus Christ and the Bible. The Gospel to be believed is that personal sinfulness is so deep that one cannot possibly go to heaven unless one has been given the righteousness of Jesus Christ. A person is a Christian when he/she believes that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is given through faith alone in Christ's finished work on the cross. A person is a Christian when he/she realizes that one's own goodness is as filthy rags to God. A person is a Christian when he/she repents of sin and has faith alone in Christ alone for justification. The Christian believes that it is not what Christ improves about him/her that qualifies one for heaven. It is rather that God gives Christ to us, in the place of our lack of righteousness, so that we are taken to heaven because of the righteousness of Jesus which is given to us through faith alone in His finished work. Unless one repents of sin and has full confidence in the sinless life and substitutionary finished work of Christ on the cross, he cannot be a Christian.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. EPH 2:4-9.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." ROM 1:16-17.

The Christian believes that Christ's righteousness alone is the righteousness which enables God to save poor sinners. To believe *less* is a denial of the Gospel. To believe *more* is a denial of the Gospel.

## The Opposite

You, are a Roman Catholic. As a Roman Catholic you are defined by the things which you believe about God, Jesus Christ and the Bible. If you were to believe things which contradict

the teachings of the Roman Catholic religion, you could no longer say; “I am a Roman Catholic.”

What then is a Roman Catholic? A Roman Catholic is a person who places his/her trust in the Roman Catholic religion’s understanding of God, Jesus Christ and the Bible. Hence, a Roman Catholic believes in God, Jesus Christ and the Bible as *presented and explained* by the Roman Catholic authorities. The explicit trust of a Roman Catholic is in the Roman Catholic religious system and in the Roman Catholic priesthood.

Can a Roman Catholic be a Christian? The answer is “yes” if a Roman Catholic forsakes the Roman Catholic religion and believes the Gospel of God, Jesus Christ and the Bible. Is Roman Catholicism a Christian religion? The answer is “no.” Roman Catholicism does not believe the Christian Gospel of God, Jesus Christ and the Bible.

## The Eternal Chasm Between Us

I am a Christian and, while there are some things upon which we both agree, they are not significant when compared with our vast differences. These are what separates us eternally.

### I. Authority

Christians believe that the Bible alone is our authority. The Bible consists of 66 individual books. There are 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Christians believe that the Bible is *materially* sufficient. By this we mean that the Bible not only contains the Word of God but actually *is* the Word of God. Christians also believe in the *formal* sufficiency of the Bible. By this we mean that the Bible can be readily understood in matters pertaining to Salvation and Sanctification. Christians also believe in *Sola Scriptura* [the Bible Alone]. By this we mean that there is nothing else other than the Bible which is the Word of God. We realize that the Lord has given to the Church good teachers and leaders. However, they are additional to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit Who teaches all Christians the basic Bible message on salvation and walking with the Lord. All Christians can know and understand what the Gospel of Salvation is and what the Lord requires of us for holy living through their own study of the Word of God.

Roman Catholics do not believe in only 66 books of the Bible. They have added other books which were not recognized as part of the Bible by early Christians from the time of the Apostles. These books are called the apocryphal books. They are secondary to the Christian but chief to the Roman Catholic. Also, the Roman Catholic does not believe that he/she is capable of understanding the Bible apart from the infallible teaching of the Roman Catholic authorities. The Roman Catholic authorities also add other sources of rule on an equal level with the Bible. The Roman Catholic is expected to give equal weight to Roman Catholic Tradition, the Magisterium and the Pope at Rome. Hence, the Roman Catholic has three sources of authority. But in reality, it should be said that the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic religion is the top command since it interprets the Bible and selects the Pope.

Thus, it may be said that Rome holds to *Sola Ecclesia* [the Church at Rome Alone for authority]. Whereas the Christian holds to *Sola Scripture* [the Bible Alone for authority]. This is a vast and irreconcilable difference between the Christian and the Roman Catholic. For one will give one's allegiance to that which one thinks to be the right authority. In giving the Roman Catholic religion autonomy over the Bible, Roman Catholics allow Rome to define and explain things pertaining to God, Jesus Christ and Salvation. It is a fatal mistake, forever setting Christians against Roman Catholicism.

## II. The Message of Salvation

Christians believe that God has revealed in the Bible the Gospel of salvation. By believing the Gospel of salvation, Christians are assured of eternal life and are no longer under the wrath of God. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The essence of the Gospel which guarantees salvation to all those who believe, is justification by faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone. Christians believe the Gospel is a call to forsake their own righteousness and trust the free gift of righteousness. Christ is given to the repentant sinner and received by faith alone.

Christians believe that there is a point in time where God opens one's heart to understand the Gospel of salvation and gives faith to believe the Gospel. The Christian vocabulary describing this event is called being *born again* or *born from above*. It is taken from the Lord's words to Nicodemus in John 3.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." JOH 3:3

This salvation experience is brought about by God who opens the eyes that they may see; and opens the ears that they may hear; and opens the heart that it may believe the Gospel of salvation by faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone. All those born from above are safe eternally in the hands of God. He will not forsake them nor leave them.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ROM 8:38-39

That Which Separates Us

Roman Catholics do not believe in a point-in-time Salvation. They do not believe in justification by faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone. Roman Catholics do not believe in a born again experience which makes one eternally secure and assured of heaven. Roman Catholics believe in other things. For instance, Roman Catholics believe that water administered by a priest takes away the original sin of Adam. They also believe that justification is an ongoing process through the sacraments of the Roman Catholic religion. Roman Catholics believe that participation in the Catholic Mass and the Catholic Penance brings about forgiveness of sins. Roman Catholics do not believe in eternal security. Roman Catholics believe that one suffers for sins in Purgatory after death. Roman Catholics believe that personal holiness merits an increase in justification. Ultimately, the ground of justification in the Roman Catholic religion is not Christ's righteousness imputed to the poor sinner but rather good works done in faith.

These are vast and irreconcilable differences. The teachings of the Roman Catholic religion on salvation are absolutely contrary to the beliefs of Christians on salvation. The two cannot be harmonized. They are completely and openly contradictory.

### **III. The Person of Jesus Christ.**

Christians believe that Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man. Christians believe that there are Three Persons in One God. Christians believe that the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ and God the Father are one in essence but different in personality. So do Roman Catholics. But Christians believe that Jesus Christ exists eternally in heaven as God incarnate in His resurrected form. Christians do not believe that Jesus Christ can be called out of heaven and transformed into a piece of bread and a vial of wine. The doctrine of transubstantiation is abhorrent to Christians. Christians do not believe that the death of Jesus Christ must be re-presented on an un-bloody altar for the forgiveness of sins.

The Roman Catholic believes that Jesus Christ is transubstantiated into the wine and bread of the Roman altar where His death at Calvary is re-presented on an un-bloody altar for the forgiveness of sins. This is the essence of the Roman Catholic Mass.

This is a vast and insurmountable difference between the religion of Rome and Christianity. Christians believe that the death of Christ was once for all time never to be repeated or re-presented. Christians believe that forgiveness of sin is through simple faith in the finished work of Christ. Christians do not believe the Bible teaches either the Roman Catholic Mass or any other of the Roman Catholic Sacraments. These Sacramental practices and their meanings are diametrically opposite to the belief and faith of a Christian.

### **IV. Paraphernalia**

Christians have confidence in the promise of Christ. All who believe in Him have eternal life:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. JOH 3:16

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." JOH 3:36

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. JOH 5:24

"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." JOH 6:40

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. JOH 6:47

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." ACT 13:48

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." ROM 6:23

"And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, [of sinners], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." 1TI 1:16

"And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life." 1JO 2:25

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." 1JO 5:13

### What Does It Mean To Believe In Jesus?

Believing in Jesus Christ means believing that being acquitted from sin is a free gift. Believing in Jesus Christ does not mean believing that He has set up a priesthood whereby one is progressively justified through faithful attendance in a Sacramental religion. One can believe *too little* about Jesus and be lost. For instance, one can believe that Jesus was a good man or a prophet and an example and still be lost. Or, one can believe *too much* about Jesus [fantastic and wrong things about Jesus] and be lost. For instance, to believe that Jesus came and preached a gospel to American Indians, that Jesus is a spirit brother of Lucifer, that Jesus is Michael the Archangel or that Jesus is contained in a piece of bread and sacrificed anew on an altar is to present another Jesus. Only one Jesus is the savior and only one gospel is the real

Gospel. Ultimately, to believe in Jesus is *not* to have confidence in what Jesus makes of you [though Christians are assured that He Who began a work will complete it in us. We are convinced from Scripture and experience that God creates a new creation within each saved sinner.] But this is not the confidence we have to go to heaven. It is rather that we believe that God accepts us for what Christ did *for* us. God was in Christ doing *for* us what He demanded *from* us.

### Disqualified

Starting with the wrong Authority and ending up with the wrong gospel message and presenting a different Jesus eliminates Roman Catholicism from Christianity. It also leads to a variety of teachings which openly contradict the tenants of Christian Faith. Here are a few:

1. Rome believes in purgatory. There is no such place as Purgatory in Christian theology or in the Bible.
2. Rome believes in Indulgences which are said to reduce time spent suffering in Purgatory for sins committed on earth. There is no such thing as Indulgences in Christian theology or in the Bible.
3. Rome believes in the Immaculate Conception, Sinless Life, Assumption and Co-Redemptress status of Mary. There is no hint of this adulation of Mary in Christian theology or in the Bible.
4. Rome believes in the Infallibility of the Pope at Rome when he speaks on matters of faith and morals. There is no suggestion of this dictatorial position in Christian theology or in the Bible.
5. Rome believes in salvation within her religious procedures and believes as well that other non-Christian religions offer God's salvation to their faithful adherents. But, there is no place in Christian theology for salvation in non-Christian religions including Roman Catholicism i.e., [Romanism], Mormonism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jehovah Witnesses, Judaism, Muslims and all other religions outside of the Gospel of Christ.

### "But I Don't Believe All Of That!"

What about those who say that they are Roman Catholic but do not believe what the Roman Catholic religion teaches?

Here we have the worst of all worlds. To claim to be a member in a non-Christian religion while throwing out the basic beliefs of that religion may be worse than embracing the error of that religion. In the final analysis one is doubly duped to proudly want to be associated with falsity while openly being disobedient to that very religion. Will God judge hypocrisy as

severely as He will the convinced heretic? In either case, the Gospel has been rejected and, with its dismissal, all hope for eternal life is forfeited.

### Putting It All Together

Hopefully, now you can see a part of what the “**Big Deal**” really is. It is deep error for Roman Catholics to think that they can call themselves Christians while *denying* the critical essentials of what the Bible teaches about the Gospel. It would be equally foolish for Christians to think that any one can be a Christian while *believing* all that Roman Catholics believe. One is right and the other is wrong. It is not a matter of semantics. It is not a matter of feelings. It is not a matter of opinion. It is not a matter of perception. It is not a matter of agreeing to disagree on some minor points. It is not a matter of definition of terms. It is not a matter of theological hair-splitting. It is not a matter of accepting those that differ.

It is strictly a matter of truth and error. It is a matter of right thinking and wrong thinking. It is a matter of right believing and wrong believing. It will do no good to say, “O, he/she believed in God and Jesus in his/her own way.” No, there is only one way to believe. It will do no good to say, “I think, despite our differences, we all really love God and all will see God no matter our religious persuasion.” No, there is only one Gospel message. There is only one way to heaven.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah came to those in Israel who were not following the revelation of God and were being swayed by the prophets of a false god and false gospel. Elijah asked them to make up their minds. He did not dream that both religions could be true:

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. 1KI 18:21

Likewise in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul was constantly protecting the Gospel against the augmentations and additions of those importing the law of the Jews. He was not at all happy with those who ruined the Gospel of justification by faith alone and salvation by grace alone with their own religious trappings:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. GAL 1:6-8

The “**Big Deal**” is the eternal destiny of souls. If we believe the wrong things about God and His Gospel then we are going to hell. If we believe the right things about God and His Gospel then it will show that we have been born from above.

This little booklet was written in hopes that you would take very seriously the claims of Christ and His Gospel message. If you are a Roman Catholic, you have not yet embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite what you may feel, your faith is not in the Gospel of Christ. Your faith is in the Roman Catholic religion which has no place in Christianity. Repent of it and come to Christ. All is lost for you eternally should you not forsake your clinging to an empty hope. Flee to Christ. Let it not be said of you: *“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.” ROM 10:2*