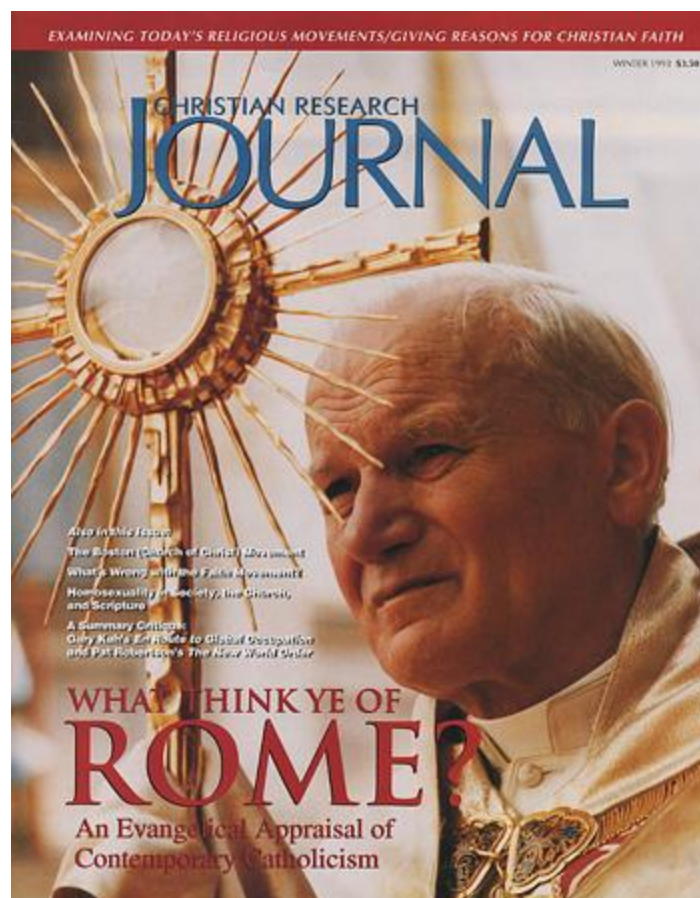


CHRISTIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE: Misleadingly 'soft' on Roman Catholicism.

In the early years after my conversion and, with a growing interest in 'apologetics', I soon became aware of the work of the **Christian Research Institute** and its 'leading light', its founder and director, the late **Dr. Walter Martin**. Over a number of years I regularly subscribed to and received their ministry magazine that contained many helpful articles on various cults and non-Christian religions.

However, I was saddened, disappointed and dare I say it, even shocked, by a series of articles they published in 1993 (some 4 years after the death of Dr Martin) on the subject of **Roman Catholicism**. Whilst their analysis of that religion was at times helpful, the eventual conclusions that they reached seemed to me to be dangerously misleading and evidenced a 'soft' approach to the subject under consideration.

As you will see the series made the front cover of their magazine which featured a photo of the then Pope, John Paul II, and a 'monstrance', used to house the consecrated host believed to have been transubstantiated into the body, blood, soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.



The series of articles can be viewed on the following links –

<http://www.equip.org/PDF/DC170-1.pdf>

<http://www.equip.org/PDF/DC170-2.pdf>

<http://www.equip.org/PDF/DC170-3.pdf>

<http://www.equip.org/PDF/DC170-4.pdf>

<http://www.equip.org/PDF/DC170-5.pdf>

It is said that the road to a certain location is ‘paved with good intentions’ and in the wake of the publication of those articles I had given thought to writing a response to them but I never quite got round to doing that and with the passing of time that idea eventually ‘dropped off my radar’.

I was really pleased then that in the latter part of last year, my good friend and fellow contender, **ROB ZINS** of ‘**A Christian Witness to Roman Catholicism**’ told me that he was going to write a review/analysis of these articles. When Rob and his wife Nancy were here with us in Ireland in December 2015 he showed me the first part of what he had written and promised to send on the remaining parts when he had finished them. That he has done, and, with his kind permission, I’m now going to share them with you. For those interested in Rob’s ministry, the web site address is –

<http://www.cwrc-rz.org/>

It is all about the gospel! (Part One)

Christian Research Institute (CRI) has an extensive web site. We find this promise from CRI on their home page:

“The Christian Research Institute exists to provide Christians worldwide with carefully researched information and well-reasoned answers that encourage them in their faith and equip them to intelligently represent it to people influenced by ideas and teachings that assault or undermine orthodox, biblical Christianity.”

Given this promise, we are interested in how CRI might handle the question of Roman Catholicism. CRI does indeed address the issue of Roman Catholicism. It does so in a five part series entitled **WHAT THINK YE OF ROME (WTYOR)**.

After reading this five part series one would have to conclude that CRI thinks very highly of Rome. While not accepting all of Roman Catholic beliefs and practices, CRI sheds the best possible light on Rome. At times CRI scolds evangelicals who disagree with their assessment of Rome with a great zeal. We wonder why the same zeal and energy is not applied to arriving at the right conclusions given the fatal deficiencies of Rome. But alas Roman beliefs are given the benefit of the doubt again and again. But before getting into specifics of the CRI's appraisal of Rome let us step back and take a broad view of the qualifying language enlisted by CRI to describe Rome in general.

CRI explains that:

“Catholicism possesses a foundational orthodoxy reflected in its affirmation of the crucial doctrines expressed in the ancient creeds.” (WTYOR Part Two)

Having said this from the start CRI will consistently soften their criticism of Roman doctrine. Notice the phraseology used in CRI's initial evaluation of Rome. CRI says that **“Protestants detect serious problems.”** CRI claims that Rome affirms teachings **“that are extraneous and inconsistent with its orthodox (Christian) foundation.”** **“These doctrinal errors are of such a serious nature that aspects of orthodoxy are undermined.”** In summary CRI concludes, **“These divergent views, however, do not warrant classifying Catholicism as a non-Christian religion or cult.”** (Emphasis ours)

We observe at the outset that the entire analysis of Roman Catholicism is framed by CRI in the context of an intramural discussion (i.e. the singular establishment being considered is for them 'Christianity'). According to CRI there are **“Catholic Christian”** scholars who have things to say about justification, religious authority, Mary, Pluralism, forgiveness of sins, and salvation. But then there are **“Protestant Christian”** scholars who also have something to say about these things. In other words this is nothing more than an in-house interesting conversation between two branches of Christianity. According to CRI, no matter how severe these distinctions may be, Rome must never be classified as a non-Christian religion. For CRI Roman Catholicism is a different sort of Christian religion. For CRI Rome may in many respects be a peculiar Christian religion. But it is by no means a cult or a non-Christian religion. Or so CRI avows.

We begin our investigation into CRI's evaluation of Rome by noticing that CRI presents us with a ten point criteria for what constitutes a real cult. Using these criteria Roman Catholicism is said to be disqualified from being labeled a cult. CRI bends over backwards to give us an elaborate standard that justifies the use of the word “cult” for a religious organization. But the criteria used by CRI are far too simplistic and terribly misleading. For instance if we say that a religion is Christian and not a cult simply because it believes in salvation by “grace” we could be making a terrible mistake.

If “salvation by grace” means doing things to get grace, or buying grace, or punishing our bodies to get grace then it is actually possible to give a pass to a radically anti-Christ religion and so promote a real cultic heresy. Without defining the nature of grace and the means to secure grace we have done nothing to truly investigate the claims of any religious organization. We believe CRI has done just this! To prove our point we have lifted from the CRI web site their criteria for cults and compared them with what we know to be true of Roman Catholicism. Here are the results of our finding based upon some examples:

CRI: “Cults, generally speaking, are small splinter groups with a fairly recent origin. Most American-based cults, for example, have to a greater or lesser degree splintered off from other Christian groups, and emerged in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Catholicism, on the other hand, is the largest body within Christendom, having almost a two-thousand-year history (it has historical continuity with apostolic, first century Christianity), and is the ecclesiastical tree from which Protestantism originally splintered.”

RESPONSE: CRI puts the cart before the horse by claiming that Catholicism is the largest body **within** Christianity. By this one statement CRI is committed to defending the Roman religion as a Christian religion rather than analyzing whether Rome actually is in fact Christian. Secondly the very heart of Roman Catholic theology and practice has zero historical continuity with first century Christianity other than recognition of some historical realities about Jesus Christ. Thirdly an “ecclesiastical tree” is hardly the same as orthodoxy. If the Reformers were right (and all Christians believe they were right) then they were leaving a cult or a non-Christian religion, take your pick. Fourthly when the argument is framed as a battle between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism the real issues of genuine Christianity are minimized and marginalized as a difference of species rather than what they really are – a difference of kind. Fifthly each category of Romish teaching must begin with the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and move forward to later Roman Catholic Councils. Christians believe that Rome disqualified herself as a Christian religion by affirming heresy at Trent. This mid-sixteenth century council is ample proof that Rome is either a cult or a non-Christian religion. Subsequent councils and papal decrees only add more Romish cultic practices and beliefs which serve to further establish this truth.

Here are some more examples of CRI accommodation to Rome.

CRI: “Cults are usually formed, molded, and controlled by a single individual or small group. The Catholic church, by contrast, has been molded by an incalculable number of people throughout its long history. Catholicism is governed by creeds, councils, and the ongoing magisterium.”

Response: There is no cult leader in the world afforded more control than the Pope at Rome. He is said to be infallible when he speaks from the chair of Peter on matters of faith and morals.

Furthermore, based upon this reasoning, the Mormon religion qualifies as Christian since Mormonism “has been molded by an incalculable number of people throughout its long history.”

CRI: “An appropriate description of a cult is “a religious group originating as a heretical sect and maintaining fervent commitment to heresy.”

RESPONSE: Rome has been fervently committed to heresy since the council of Trent and has added even more with the advent of Vatican I and Vatican II. This is 474 years of “maintaining a fervent commitment to heresy.”

CRI: “Cults (when defined as heretical sects) are classified as such because of their outright denial or rejection of essential Christian doctrine. Historically, this has principally been a denial of the nature of God (the Trinity), the nature of the incarnate Christ (divine-human), and of the absolute necessity of divine grace in salvation (the Pelagian controversy). While Protestants have accused Catholicism of having an illegitimate authority and of confusing the gospel (two serious charges to be examined later), Catholicism does affirm the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and that salvation is ultimately a gift of God’s grace (a rejection of Pelagianism).”

RESPONSE: Here in a nut shell CRI brings us to the heart of the matter. Evidently the essence of belief within Christianity is defined by CRI as the nature of the Trinity, the nature of the incarnate Christ and of the necessity of divine grace in salvation. This may be likened to a three legged stool. But if one leg is missing the entire stool falls over and is worthless. While we would agree that Rome declares a belief in the nature of the incarnate Christ. We also believe that Rome undermines and emasculates the essence of the incarnation of Christ with her doctrine of transubstantiation and the bloodless sacrifice of her false “christ” on her altar. While we agree that Rome declares a belief in the nature of the Trinity. We also believe Rome demeans and denigrates the entire doctrine of the Holy Spirit through her sacrament of confirmation and her ongoing heresy of asserting that her Pope is the Vicar of Christ instead of the Holy Spirit.

It is however the third leg of the stool where subtle deceitfulness trumps reality! In the first place to deny Pelagianism is not to affirm the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone. Secondly Rome does not define grace in the same way as Christianity. For Rome grace comes through her sacraments starting with infant baptism. Through her doctrine of **ex opera operato** (the thing done brings about the thing signified) Rome teaches that the performance of a religious ritual brings down the grace of God to the individual involved in the ritual. For Rome grace is an infusion designed to clean up and restore a person to holiness in order to qualify that person for entry into Heaven, albeit, the Romish Purgatory is the hope of most. For Rome grace is dispensed by an earthly priesthood committed to the Romish sacraments. If we were to say that so and so religion was Christian because it affirmed “salvation by grace” only to find out that “grace” was gained and merited by crawling through a lifetime of religious rituals what would be thought of it?

For CRI to boldly state, “Catholicism does affirm the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and that salvation is ultimately a gift of God’s grace” brings into question the legitimacy of trusting CRI. Clearly Rome believes in salvation by grace **earned** through faithful attendance at the altar of her heretical sacraments. This is not the grace of God known to Christians. Furthermore Christians know of no Christ who transubstantiates himself into a wafer of bread and re-presents his one and only sacrifice on a bloodless Roman Catholic altar!

CRI: “Cults frequently have a low view of the Bible, replacing or supplementing it with their own so-called “sacred writings.” In fact, cults often argue that the Bible has been, to some extent, corrupted and therefore their writings are needed to restore the truth. While Catholicism’s acceptance of non-canonical writings (the Apocrypha) and placing of apostolic tradition on par with Scripture are fundamental problems to the Protestant, Catholics nevertheless retain a high view of the Bible (inspired and infallible) and see it as their central source of revelation.”

RESPONSE: This assertion by CRI is almost too fantastic to believe. But when one is committed to protecting a cult rather than exposing a cult this is what we get. **In reality, there could be no lower view of the Bible than in Rome.** Rome reserves the right to be the only capable interpreter of the Bible on earth. Rome adds non-canonical books to the Bible and builds doctrine from them. Rome adds something they call Holy Tradition right alongside the Bible and puts her tradition on an equal footing with the Bible. This is done despite the fact that no one in Rome can adequately define Holy Tradition. Yet time and time again it is called upon to trump the Bible. Rome adds to the Bible every time a full council meets and makes a declaration (witness the sinlessness of Mary and her Assumption in Heaven).

Finally Rome declares that her Pope speaks for Christ and therefore his word is Scripture when spoken on matters of faith and morals from the chair of Peter. **Not one Roman Catholic theologian knows exactly how many times the Pope has spoken ex cathedra.** There is no infallible list of infallible proclamations. In spite of all this CRI has the audacity to say that Catholics “retain a high view of the Bible.” Only those who wish to oblige Rome fail to see how astonishingly wrong their assessment of Rome really is.

CRI does everything in its power to minimize and trivialize the vast differences between Roman Catholicism and historic Christianity. CRI fails to tell us that Roman Catholic practice has little or no contact with the Bible. The Scriptures were the only word of God for the early church and they remain the only Word of God for all Christians today. CRI fails to tell us that the early church knew nothing of a huge monolithic block governed essentially by one man acting as the Vicar of Christ on earth head quartered in Rome.

Leading up to and concluding with the so-called infallible decrees of the Council of Trent there is no doubt that Rome is an anti-Christ, non-Christian religion, and remains so to this day. Her doctrines “typed and filed” in 1542 have only gotten worse and more cultish over time.

Let us take one more look at the deception of CRI in dealing with Rome. We notice when it comes to the cultish pattern of rigid control CRI views Rome's practices as "unhealthy in times past" but moderated today due to Rome's "broad diversity." Here is the logic of CRI that once again, according to CRI, dismiss all fears of Rome actually practicing cultish control.

CRI: "Cults typically exercise rigid control over their members and demand unquestioning submission, with disobedience punished by shunning and/or excommunication. While Catholicism has exercised a triumphalism and an unhealthy control over its members in times past, this is far less true today, especially since the Second Vatican Council. Contemporary Catholicism's broad diversity as illustrated in Part one of this series certainly proves this point."

RESPONSE: Despite the fact that for hundreds of years Rome brashly asserted that outside the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation, CRI does not think Rome has been guilty of shunning or excommunication. However, excommunication might be the middle name of Rome. Rome is responsible for the heresy of Purgatory, indulgences, confession to a priest, and earthly penances administered by the Romish priests. On top of that is the requirement to attend Mass and to follow the rigid requirements Rome's sacramental system. Instead of pointing out Roman control over her adherents from the cradle to the grave, CRI placates Rome by calling her practices "triumphalism". This is simply bizarre.

However it gets worse. CRI wishes to dispel cultish Roman control over her people by citing the advancements made in Rome since Vatican II. **The trouble with all this is that Roman Catholicism after Vatican II has added a deadly pluralism in her quest for diversity.** While still retaining control of her followers, Rome has completely undercut the gospel of Jesus Christ by declaring that non-Christian religions have a pathway to Heaven. So whether it is the cradle to grave domination over her devotees, or a broad latitudinal approach to non-Christian religions, Rome continues to manipulate her adherents and finds progressive ways to manipulate the gospel as well.

Dipsuchos

Double-Minded (Part Two)

We have found, in our investigation into the **Christian Research Institute**, attempts to exclude Roman Catholicism from being categorized as a cult or a non-Christian religion, to be a failure. CRI fails because of two primary errors. The first is the **apriori** (before the fact) assumption by CRI that Roman Catholicism is a wing of Christianity. The second is CRI's failure to convince us due to a superficial and misleading understanding of the fatal differences between the gospel of Rome and the gospel of Christianity.

We now turn our attention to the very heart of the matter. In our first article we concluded that CRI is capable of pointing out some differences between Roman Catholicism and Christianity but is incapable of seeing that these differences are incurable and so lethal to the gospel of Christianity that Rome deserves to be marked as a cult or non-Christian religion.

In part five of their series on Roman Catholicism CRI begins with a summary statement.

“The Protestant Reformers recovered the biblical view of forensic justification, that a person is legally declared righteous by God on the basis of faith alone. In so doing, their principle of “salvation by faith alone” gave a more biblical specificity to the common Augustinian view of “salvation by grace alone” held by Catholics and Protestants alike. For although Rome has always held the essential belief in salvation by grace, its view of justification - made dogma by the Council of Trent - obscures the pure grace of God, if not at times negating it in practice.”

This summary statement is followed up by an introductory sentence which launches CRI into a 10 page article on justification. Here is the introductory sentence.

“Roman Catholics and evangelicals share a common core of beliefs about salvation.”

We notice that CRI uses the same kinds of accommodating words in this article as their previous article. Protestant reformers are said to have given “a more biblical specificity to the common Augustinian view of ‘salvation by grace alone’ held by Catholics and Protestants alike.” CRI explains that “Rome has always held the essential belief in salvation by grace...” However Rome’s view of justification “obscures the pure grace of God, if not at times negating the gospel.” These soft sell assertions are then summed up by CRI insisting that Roman Catholics and evangelicals “share a common core belief about salvation.” (Emphasis ours)

Let us be perfectly clear. Salvation by “**grace alone**” has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic concept of grace procured through religious rituals by Roman Catholic priests. This is not the glorious grace of God or the gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, if left undefined, this catch phrase “**salvation by grace alone**” becomes a wax nose that can be misshapen to forge deceptive, ambiguous, confusing, and disingenuous expressions of unity! **CRI is guilty of doing this very thing.** Furthermore, salvation by faith alone is not a mere “**biblical specificity**” as though it were some kind of add on to a gospel already shared by Protestants and Catholics. **Salvation by faith alone in Christ alone is the only gospel that guarantees the integrity of what the Bible means by “grace alone.”**

The Roman Catholic ruinous and fatal misunderstanding of grace serves only to obliterate the true gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. CRI compromises the gospel and grants Rome entry into the Christian community by claiming that Rome has always held the “essential” belief in salvation by grace.

But CRI fails miserably to tell us that Rome does not hold to an essential belief in biblical grace! Rome's grace is held hostage by Rome's notorious and anti-Christ system of grace begetting sacraments and rituals which is governed by a priestly caste formed to dispense grace. This is not "salvation by grace" but rather grace held hostage by the Roman Catholic religion.

The subterfuge continues with CRI as they almost begrudgingly admit that Rome's view of justification "obscures the pure grace of God." There are two things wrong with this kind of admission. The first is that it leaves the impression that there is a grace of God that saves even though it obscures. Rome has this kind of grace. CRI gives the impression that there is a "more pure" kind of grace that somehow has eluded Rome but is not fatal to Rome.

The second is this idea of obscuring. To obscure is to muddy and muddle. It is to shroud or veil. CRI is deliberate in using this kind of language and it is deceptive. Rome does not "obscure" the grace of God. **Rome re-defines the grace of God** by distorting both the meaning of grace and the way God's grace is bestowed. By the time Rome is finished with the concept of grace it has no relation whatsoever to the real grace of God found in the gospel.

Lastly, in so far as CRI's introduction to justification is concerned, we would have you notice that, despite CRI's protest to the contrary, Roman Catholicism does not share a common "core belief about salvation." It is not even close. Rome denies justification by faith alone, forensic justification, Christ's righteousness as the only ground of justification, eternal security while affirming infant baptismal regeneration, incremental justification, increase and decrease of justification, meritorious justification, loss of salvation, and Purgatory just to name a few of the diametrically opposite core beliefs that evangelicals find heretical in Rome.

One would think that a cursory reading of Roman Catholic theology and doctrine which trumpets her way to gain heaven would convince anyone that Roman Catholicism is simply not Christian. However CRI is not of this breed. For mystical reasons that defy biblical exegesis, common sense, historical analysis, and observance of ongoing Roman Catholic practices CRI presses on, always warding off and forestalling the obvious. CRI is bound and determined to convince us that Roman Catholic dogma and practice (no matter how contrary to evangelical and biblical Christianity) is really just a bit different.

We turn now to CRI's list of "common soteriological roots." By this list CRI announces that any differences we have with Rome must be viewed through the lens of some sort of common root system. We shall enumerate their list and comment.

CRI #1 "A soteriological survey of both the leading Roman Catholic theologians and Protestant Reformers reveals a number of commonalities. First, both believe salvation is affected through historic, divine intervention"

Comment: By this CRI wants us to keep in mind that Catholics and Protestants believe that some sort of salvation is by God's action in the person and history of Jesus Christ. It would be nice to think that Protestants agree with Roman Catholics on something significant concerning the planning, reasoning, nature, and accomplishment of God's action in history through Jesus Christ. However, after agreeing only that Jesus Christ really is God's Son incarnate it all breaks down from there. In short there is no commonality whatsoever on the nature and execution of God's plan of salvation. Divine intervention by God in Christ? "yes." Any agreement on what this divine intervention means? "**not a hope.**"

CRI #2 "Both evangelicals and Catholics believe salvation is moral and spiritual. Salvation is related to a deliverance from sin and its consequences.

Comment: Could someone possibly be broader than this? CRI might as well have said that, "evangelicals and Catholics believe in some sort of moral and spiritual salvation." Or, "evangelicals and Catholics believe that 2 plus 2 equals 4 and that there are stars in the sky." How about, "Roman Catholic men and evangelical men both put their pants on one leg at a time?" To say that Catholics and evangelicals believe in a moral and spiritual salvation and this proves common soteriological roots is literally grasping at straws and missing!

CRI #3 "Salvation is eschatological for both Catholics and evangelicals."

Comment: By this CRI means that both Catholics and evangelicals await the fullness of salvation at some point in the future. How does this illustrate common soteriological roots? It only shows that two different religions are awaiting their totally opposite views of salvation to ultimately unfold at some time in the future.

CRI #4 "The grace of God is absolutely necessary for salvation. And, initial justification is based on grace alone, apart from all works."

Comment: As we have already treated this misuse of the term "grace" above so we shall be brief here. When Rome speaks of the grace of God it means that which comes from God through man-made religious rituals. Regardless if it is "grace" bestowed in her infant baptism or in her sacramentalism Rome butchers the biblical concept of grace. **Rome professes a grace called down by a priestly class and infused into the recipient to improve character that he/she might qualify for heaven.** Christians believe the grace of God is God's undeserved favor that brings both spiritual life and secures eternal life for all those in Christ secured by faith alone.

In #4 of their alleged common root system we notice again that CRI is trumpeting Rome's claim of "grace alone" in her infant baptismal grace. Does CRI want us to think that Rome's infant justification through her baptism is likened to Christian justification by grace alone through faith alone? Does CRI want us to fantasize that Rome's claim of infant justification through her infant baptism is somehow like Christian justification because Rome claims her first sacrament is by grace alone apart from works? We think that this is precisely what CRI desires.

Obviously the awful truth for Rome and CRI is that there is no such thing as an ‘initial justification’, via infant baptism, followed by an ongoing incremental justification in Christian soteriology. So how can the Christian concept of grace and Rome’s concept of grace, which cancel out each other, be illustrative of a common soteriological root? **One begins to ask what motive might drive this distorted and deformed thinking of CRI.**

CRI and the Roman Catholic Council of Trent

We shift our attention now to CRI’s presentation of the Roman Catholic water shed doctrines on justification articulated at the Council of Trent. Session VI of the Council of Trent devotes 16 Chapters and 33 Canons to the question of justification. The Roman Catholic community speaks loudly and clearly about the justification of the ungodly. We find CRI’s treatment of the dramatic statements on justification decreed by the Council of Trent to be complicated, drawn-out, longwinded, and erratic.

Here is CRI’s first paragraph with the corresponding footnote that is supposed to present the teaching of the Council of Trent on justification.

“On January 9, 1547, the Council participants agreed on a final formula for justification: First, although several Council members recognized an extrinsic element in justification (thereby approaching the Reformers on this point), the consensus view was that “the opinion that a sinner may be justified solely as a matter of reputation or imputation...is rejected.” And so, “justification is thus defined in terms of a man becoming, and not merely being reputed as, righteous...” (Emphases added).” 24

Footnote to the above: “24 Ibid. 72. The words “solely” and “merely” in these quotes indicate that Trent did not reject forensic justification as such.”

We find this kind of muddying to be terribly misleading and a smokescreen that allows CRI to hide away the true teachings of the Council of Trent. Why not be direct and straightforward? Rome certainly is clear-cut and uncomplicated. CRI mixes concepts and definitions in a tossed salad that would fatigue even the most experienced pastor/teacher let alone the common man who wishes to know what the Roman Catholic religion really believes. With a bad mix of quotations and bad conclusions CRI forces us to wade through CRI written rhetoric to finally arrive at where we began in our first article. **CRI does everything humanly possible, behind the mask of fairness, to diminish and shrug off the real import of what Rome really teaches.**

Is it true that “Trent did not reject forensic justification as such” claimed by CRI in the footnote above? Let’s try to set the record straight. Contrary to CRI, Rome is 100% against forensic justification at all levels at all times. Forensic justification is the correct understanding that God declares the ungodly justified or acquitted from their just punishment on the basis that Jesus Christ died a substitutionary atonement for their sins.

The righteousness of Christ is imputed through faith alone in a legal sense to sinners. The divine is that the ungodly are now justified before God and do not pay the penalty of sin they deserve. **Hence the rally of the Reformation was “justification by faith alone.”Rome rejects this concept of justification.** We can all read exactly what Rome believes without having to find our way through a maze of smoke contributed by CRI.

CANON IX.–“If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

CANON XI.–“If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favour of God; let him be anathema.”

CANON XXIV.–“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.”

CRI seems intent on matching Rome’s sacramental infant baptismal regeneration/justification with Christian forensic justification. CRI then explains that Rome understands justification in two senses. The **initial sense** is “by grace alone” in Rome’s infant justification. This somehow corresponds to Christian grace alone/faith alone justification. But CRI is quick to elucidate that **in Rome there is a second sense of justification** corresponding to Christian sanctification.

“... Trent understands justification in two senses (the second corresponding to the Reformed doctrine of sanctification); good works are required in the second sense as a condition for ultimate justification. Therefore, it is possible and necessary (in this second sense) to keep the law of God.”

Christians reject Rome’s initial infant baptismal justification. The New Testament knows nothing of justification based upon infant baptism. **CRI should have dismissed this heresy immediately.** But CRI lets it linger because they wish to link it to Christian justification by grace alone through faith alone since Rome omits “works” from their initial infant justification. **Shame on CRI.** When we once see that there is in fact only one justification and it is grounded upon the righteousness of Christ imputed to poor lost sinners through faith alone we can clear the air on Rome’s second sense of justification. **This so called second sense justification is pure myth and nonsense. Again CRI should have shut this down as heresy from the start.** But instead they give credence to such a fiction. But wait, CRI gets in deeper by not only failing to expose the heresy of Rome’s second sense justification but by likening it to Christian sanctification!

Rome's fictitious second sense requires good works as a condition for ultimate justification. Evidently CRI thinks Christian sanctification requires good works for ultimate sanctification. Rome's fictitious second sense makes it possible and necessary to keep the law of God. Evidently CRI thinks that Christian sanctification entails the possibility and necessity of keeping of God's law. **CRI is wrong at every turn!**

We need to close with one more illustration of CRI's masterful diversions and decoys. Notice how "favorable" Rome looks to the misguided eye in CRI's summary given below:

"Trent states that our initial justification must be seen as a "gift." Thus, it comes as a surprise to many Protestants that Roman Catholics believe that "if anyone shall say that man can be justified before God by his own works which are done...without divine grace through Christ Jesus: let him be anathema." Further, "none of those things which precede justification, whether faith or works, merits the grace of justification. For if it is by grace, it is no more by works; otherwise, as the apostle says, grace is no more grace."

The Bible does not teach an **initial** justification wrought by infant baptism. Hence there is no such thing as a "gift" of "initial" justification as taught by Rome. It simply is not the truth. It is Roman Catholic heresy. **CRI then stupidly swallows the Roman Catholic bait.** Without any stipulation that "initial" justification references the radical heresy of infant baptismal justification/regeneration, CRI comments that it comes as a surprise to Protestants that Catholics believe no man can be justified by his own works without divine grace! **CRI overlooks that divine grace is called down by a priest in infant baptism.** CRI omits that the infant is passive and hence no works can be included. CRI only slips in that this is Rome's "initial justification." CRI continues the mockery by adding a quote from the Council of Trent that nothing preceding justification, whether faith or works, merits the grace of justification. CRI ignores that these words are reserved for Rome's first sense of "initial" infant baptismal justification. **Here is what CRI should have said to be honest and upfront.**

"Trent states that Rome's initial justification found in her first sacrament of infant baptismal justification/regeneration/salvation must be seen as a gift."

CRI should have then remarked how clever Rome is in trying to include such a charade as the equivalent of the true grace alone justification, without works or merit cherished by all Christians. CRI instead continues the absurdity!

What does Rome really believe about justification? What is the nature of justification that really qualifies Rome's devotees for heaven? How does one gain eternal life in Rome? Trent is explicit and unambiguous. **Here is Trent with CRI muddying the waters.**

“And, for this cause, life eternal is to be proposed to those working well unto the end, and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ, and as a reward which is according to the promise of God Himself, to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits” (Trent Chapter XVI). (Emphasis ours)

“...we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified, to prevent their being accounted to have, by those very works which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, and to have truly merited eternal life, to be obtained also in its (due) time, if so be, however, that they depart in grace:” (Trent Chapter XVI). (Emphasis ours)

Dipsuchos

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.

ROB ZINS.

I hope that these three well thought-out and well-presented articles by **Rob Zins** will clearly illustrate the misleading and spiritually dangerous 'verdict' passed upon Roman Catholicism by the Christian Research Institute.

As I mentioned in the second paragraph of this article CRI published their articles in 1993, some 4 years after the death of Dr Martin in 1989. Prior to his death Dr Martin had publicly debated on the John Ankerberg show with Jesuit priest, Mitchell Pacwa on the subject of 'Purgatory'.

In 1991 CRI included in their ministry magazine an article by Mitchell Pacwa giving information on '**The Enneagram**' – many of the factual/historical details in the article are informative but I would seriously question whether Dr Martin would have approved of such a publication, particularly in the light of his public debate and rejection of the views of Mr Pacwa, not only on purgatory, but also on the crucial issue of 'justification'.

It seems to me that perhaps the seeds of compromise by CRI on the subject of Roman Catholicism were sown with the publication of that article by Mr Pacwa in 1991 and then came to 'full-bloom' with the articles they then published in 1993.

Perhaps the moral of this story is for God's people to check out every such publication, from whatever source, because past reputation is not something to be totally relied on – and I encourage similar 'scrutiny' when it comes to any article put out in the public domain by '**Take Heed**'.

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 2nd April 2016