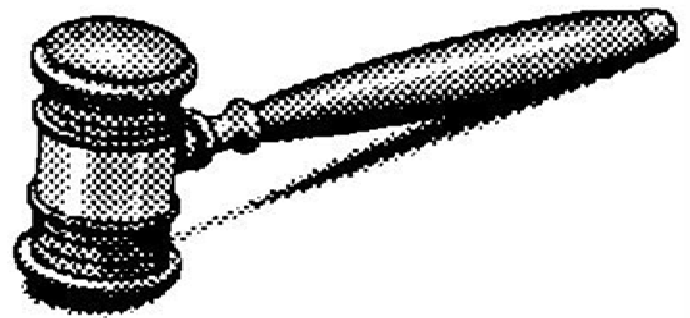


THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC
VIEW OF
JUSTIFICATION



Rome says the Protestant view of
Justification is a legal fiction.

Is it?

The Roman Catholic View of Justification

“The whole question between the Popish and Protestant Churches lies here: Are we justified by our own righteousness, or by the righteousness of Christ? [Are we justified] by a righteousness infused and inherent, or by a righteousness imputed, which is not in us, but in Him?”

-James Buchanan – *Justification*

The Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century was a rediscovery of the biblical doctrine of Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. You have heard these Latin terms before, *sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus*. There are 2 others often included to make the 5 sola's. They are *sola Scriptura* and *Sola Deo gloria*. Very often when we consider these terms, there is a big emphasis placed on what many believe to be the key word in each phrase – grace, faith, Christ, the Scriptures, and the Glory of God.

There is no doubt that those terms are important. However, it was not those terms that the Reformers were necessarily arguing about. To them, the most important word was the word *sola* - alone. Rome taught, and still teaches, that man is saved by grace, through faith, in Christ, but they do not teach, and never have taught, that man is saved by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, in Christ *alone*. Rome has always believed that man cooperates with the grace of God and supplies additional resources to bolster his own faith. Rome also believes that Christ is not the exclusive object of faith when it comes to justification. They teach that one must look to the church, their baptism, the penance they have performed, and other sacraments in the church as the objects of their faith.

Tonight, I want us to look at several statements from Rome's own documents, both past and present, to learn exactly what they teach when it comes to the Biblical doctrine of justification. This is valuable information because the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are so prevalent in our society. You might think that a strange thing to say since we live in a Southern “Bible believing” culture in the middle of the so-called “Bible belt.” However, when we understand Rome's teachings on this subject, we will discover that

9. Justification may be completed in purgatory.	9. There is no purgatory or need for it.
10. Justification may be obtained by drawing from the Treasury of Merit.	10. The only merit is that of Christ alone.
11. Justification is sacerdotal.	11. Justification is non-sacerdotal.

compromised. Rome teaches that God justifies only people who have already made themselves just.

If Rome is right in denying the Orthodox doctrine of imputed rather than infused righteousness, then they would prove too much. If the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is a legal fiction, then the imputation of our sin to Christ would also be a legal fiction. The entire Gospel would be overthrown.

The charge of legal fiction is a very serious one. If Rome is right, then the Gospel itself is fiction, and therefore all of Christianity is fiction, and we are all doomed.

Conclusion:

Consider this comparison between Rome and the Bible.

Rome	The Bible
1. Baptism (with penance) is the instrumental cause of justification.	1. Faith is the instrumental cause of justification.
2. Justification is by infusion.	2. Justification is by imputation.
3. Justification is analytical.	3. Justification is synthetic.
4. Justification is based on an inherent righteousness.	4. Justification is based on an alien (Christ's) righteousness.
5. Justification is by faith plus works.	5. Justification is by faith alone.
6. Justification is by grace and merit.	6. Justification is by grace alone.
7. Justification is on the basis of Christ's righteousness and my righteousness.	7. Justification is on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone.
8. Justification can be undone by mortal sin.	8. There is no "mortal sin" for a person who is justified.

it is the natural thinking of every unsaved man. The foundational principle of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is that Man must help save himself.

This is also important because of the rise of what is called "The New Perspectives on Paul." In some ways, these perspectives are not new at all because Rome has been teaching them for years. These so-called "New Perspectives" are nothing more than Roman Catholic teaching dressed up in different clothes.

I. Statements from the Council of Trent

Among many other statements, The Council of Trent issued 33 Canons defining Rome's position on the doctrine of justification. Looking at a few of these statements reveals the errors of Rome on this important doctrine.

The Council of Trent

The Council of Trent was held at Trent, Italy from 1545-1563. It was Rome's principal instrument in the Counter Reformation. It formulated her response to the Protestant doctrine of free, gracious justification, received by the imputation of Christ's righteousness through faith without works. That response was so carefully worked out that Rome has never altered it, and the first and second Vatican Councils [1869-1870 & 1962-1965 respectfully] did not even attempt an updating or rewording of the Tridentine formula. Though Rome does not hurl her anathemas quite so freely or publicly as Trent did, Trent is still the authentic voice of the Roman Catholic church—as is evident from the frequency with which Vatican II documents and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* appeal to it as proof of their positions."
 - Dr. Alan Cairns in his *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

A. Faith

When Luther and the Reformers insisted on using the phrase *sola fide*, it was not the word *fide* that was at the center

of the controversy. It was the word *sola*. Rome teaches that justification is by faith. Many Protestants err when they say that Protestants believe in justification by faith and Rome believes in justification by works. The truth is that Rome believes in justification by faith, but they do not teach that it is by faith *alone*. This is clearly seen by reading Cannon IX of the Council of Trent.

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.”

B. The Sufficiency of Christ

The next Canon indicates that Rome believes that the righteous merits of Christ are not sufficient to render a person justified. Trent teaches that the righteousness of Christ is necessary, but the convert must also supply his own righteousness to some degree.

The Bible Says:

Romans 3:28 “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Galatians 2:16 “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

The Bible Says:

I Corinthians 1:30 “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Titus 3:5 “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”

us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life.”

Analytic vs. Synthetic Statements

Linguistic philosophy makes a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. An analytic statement is a redundancy. In an analytic sentence, the predicate does not add any new information that is not already found in the subject. It is a statement that is true by definition. For example, “A bachelor is an unmarried man,” is an analytic statement. The fact given about the bachelor being unmarried does not add any new information that I did not know from the dictionary definition of the word bachelor. By definition, a bachelor is an unmarried man. An example of a synthetic statement would be, “The bachelor is bald.” Here, I learn new information about the bachelor that I would not already know from the definition of the word bachelor.

Is the Protestant view a Legal Fiction?

In Rome’s opinion, the Protestant view of Justification is a “legal fiction.” This is a charge that is worthy of some consideration.

Paul says in Romans 3:26, “To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” That means that when God justifies a sinner, He can do so justly without violating His own justice. God is just when He justifies us. This is when Rome says the Protestants teach a legal fiction.

In Rome’s opinion, if it is true that God declares people to be righteous who are not inherently righteous themselves, then God is involved in a form of deceit, and His integrity and justice are

us 'the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ' and through Baptism:"

2. Penance

Catholic theology also teaches that if a man loses his justification because of mortal sin, then he can regain his position of justification through penance. For Rome, penance is the second instrumental cause of justification.

1446

"Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."

B. Infused vs. Imputed righteousness

Rome teaches that justification involves the entire process of sanctification. They say that in Justification a man is made "inwardly just." Rome's definition of justification is analytic. They say that in justification, just men are justified. The Orthodox position is synthetic. They say that sinners are justified. Rome confuses the doctrines of justification and sanctification.

1989

". . . Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man."

1992

". . . Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes

CANON X

"If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby He merited for us to be justified; or that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just; let him be anathema."

C. Grace

When the Reformers insisted on the phrase *sola gratia*, it was not the *gratia* that they were fighting for. It was the *sola*. Rome teaches that grace is required for justification, but they deny the teaching of free grace. The new comer to the Roman Catholic Church must prepare himself to receive grace. He must use the grace that is inherent in him to co-operate with God's grace.

The Bible Says:

Romans 3:24 "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

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."

D. Assurance of Justification

One of the saddest realities of the Roman Catholic teaching on justification is that the Catholic can never have assurance of his justification or lack thereof. He is always guessing as to whether or not he has done enough to merit the justification God has offered him.

No Catholic can be sure that he will go to Heaven when he dies. He is taught that he will go to Purgatory so that he can purge away his remaining sins. The Catholic's faith does not permit him to believe that his justification secures for him a permanent and irrevocable forgiveness.

CANON XV

"If any one saith, that a man, who is born again and justified, is bound of faith to believe that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; let him be anathema.

These are just a few of the direct statements from the Council of Trent. It would be easy to argue, as many do, that Trent is an ancient document, and Rome has changed. The two most recent Church Councils have been the First Vatican Council in 1869-1870, and the Second Vatican Council from 1962-1965. If you were to study these two Councils, it would be clear to you that none of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church have changed. As we examine the Catholic Catechism, you will see what I mean.

II. Catechism of the Catholic Church

The New Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1997, is the most recent, official statement of Roman Catholic Theology. This document was appointed to be written by Pope John Paul II in 1986. Guess who was appointed as the chairman of the editorial committee to draft this new Catechism. It was none other than a German Cardinal named Joseph Ratzinger, otherwise known as the current Pope, Pope Benedict XVI. In

The Bible Says:

Isaiah 32:17 "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

Hebrews 6:11 "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."

this Catechism, Rome made no attempt to change what The Council of Trent had already said concerning the doctrine of justification. In fact, they use statements from Trent as "proof texts" for their catechismal statements. The statements of Rome's own Catechism prove that they have an erroneous view of justification.

A. The Cause of Justification

1. Baptism

Roman Catholic theology teaches that justification begins at baptism. They teach that the water of baptism washes away original sin. Consider paragraph 1263 of the Catholic Catechism

1263

"By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. . .") and is the "instrumental cause" of justification.

You might ask, where do they get that language? Is it from the Bible? The answer is that the proof text they use for this statement on baptism is from the 6th session of the Council of Trent, Chapter VII paragraph 2. This is an example of Roman Catholic Church tradition trumping the Bible.

1987

"The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to

The Bible Says:

Romans 3:28 "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."