

Understanding Roman Catholicism

Teacher
David James

*© Copyright 2015 by David James
The Alliance for Biblical Integrity*

SYLLABUS

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

Ten class periods will be used to study Roman Catholicism, with a view to ministering to Catholics, both in terms of evangelism and discipleship. In these class periods we will note such things as the basic doctrines, the sacraments, understanding Roman Catholic thinking, major differences that divide Catholics and Evangelicals, some attempts to bridge that divide, and most importantly, evaluating all of these in light of Scripture. While there are other forms of Catholicism, most notably the Eastern Orthodox Church, this course focuses almost exclusively on the western or Latin church, headquartered in Vatican City in Rome.

PURPOSE

Roman Catholics do not uniquely need to be reached with the gospel message, but there are many things about Roman Catholicism that make it unique as a religious system. The main purpose of this course is to help the student develop a practical working knowledge of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice that will equip them to effectively reach Catholics for Christ and disciple individual Catholics who may be believers who have continued within Catholicism, as well as those who are new believers seeking a different direction with their lives.

RATIONALE

Word of Life Bible Institute seeks to expose the students to the major religions in the world with the goal of effectively presenting the gospel to followers of these religions. While unlike some other religions in which there are no born-again believers in Christ, this is not exclusively true of Roman Catholicism and so this presents some unique challenges in terms of understanding the theological and practical differences that exist between the Roman Catholic Church and conservative evangelicalism, as well as in terms of ministering to individual Catholics.

COURSE GOALS

Through the teaching, reading and exams the student should be able to:

- Understand the basic doctrines and practices of Roman Catholicism
- Know how to evaluate and biblically respond to Roman Catholic theology
- Understand the major areas that separate Roman Catholic theology from biblical evangelical theology
- Know how to effectively minister to Roman Catholics in terms of both evangelism and discipleship, as appropriate

PROCEDURES FOR THE COURSE

- Students will be expected to take thorough notes during the class lectures
- Students will read the entire notebook *Essentials of Roman Catholicism* - which will be reported on the final
- Students will take a final exam, based on both the lectures and the reading for the course

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Intro and Part I - due by the beginning of class, Wednesday, February 11 (6 pts)

Part II and Appendix B - due by the beginning of class, Thursday, February 12 (6 pts)

Part III - due by the beginning of class, Friday, February 13 (5 pts)

Appendix A - due by the time of the final exam (3 pts)

and Evangelicals and Catholics Together - due by the time of the final exam (5 pts)

GRADING

Final Exam: 75%

Reading: 25%

UNDERSTANDING ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Introduction

1A. Why should Evangelicals study Roman Catholicism?

2A. Are there areas of theological agreement?

3A. Is Roman Catholicism a cult?

4A. Are Catholics Christians?

5A. Are “Evangelicals and Catholics Together”?

6A. What, then, should be our attitude?

Unofficial Categories of Roman Catholics

1A. Ultra-traditionalist Catholics

2A. Traditionalist Catholics

3A. Liberal Catholics

4A. Charismatic / evangelical Catholics

5A. Cultural Catholics

6A. Popular folk Catholics

History of the Catholic Church

70	Rome replaces Antioch as center of Christianity
99	Death of Clement, successor to Peter
100	Christianity outlawed
107	Ignatius first uses "catholic"
184	Origen born
196	Latin for liturgy in West, Easter controversy
257	Emperor Valerian tries to destroy Christianity
305	Council of Elvira Spain imposes celibacy
311	Edict of Toleration by Galerius: church is tolerated
313	Edict of Milan by Constantine: church is legal
325	Nicaea I, Nicene Creed
331	Seat of Roman Empire moved to Constantinople
336	Earliest record of celebration of Christmas in Rome
354	Birth of Augustine of Hippo
366	Jerome commissioned to translate Vulgate
381	Council of Constantinople: Christianity made official
397	New Testament formalized at Carthage
410	Rome falls
432	St. Patrick arrives in Ireland
451	Council of Chalcedon, Papal authority, "Mother of God"
480	Benedictine order established
533	John II first pope to change name
590	Pope Gregory I becomes pope
610	Muhammad purportedly receives revelations
711	Muslims begin conquest of Spain
726	Iconoclastic controversy begins
751	Creation of Papal States
787	Nicaea I (iconoclasm condemned)
844	Language about the Real Presence developed

846	Muslims invade Italy, attack Rom
962	Holy Roman Empire established
993	First official canonization of a saint
1054	Great (East/West) Schism
1073	Theory of papal infallibility proposed
1098	First crusade, Jerusalem taken
1147	Second crusade, Jerusalem lost
1189	Third crusade
1202	Fourth crusade
1212	Franciscans become first mendicant order
1215	Lateran IV (“transubstantiation”)
1224	Thomas Aquinas born
1231	Papal inquisition begins
1274	Temporary reunion of church in East and West
1301	King of France arrests pope
1305	Papacy moved to Avignon
1377	Papacy returned to Rome, but two popes elected
1417	Council of Constance ends Great Schism
1453	Muslims take Constantinople
1456	Gutenberg Bible printed
1486	Spanish Inquisition begins
1492	Columbus discovers Americas
1506	St Peter’s basilica begun
1508	Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michaelangelo
1512	Lateran V (indulgences)
1517	Martin Luther’s 95 theses
1519	Zwingli triggers Reformation in Switzerland
1533	King Henry VIII excommunicated
1540	Jesuits established, Ignatius of Loyola
1543	Copernicus asserts heliocentricity
1544	Jesuit missions activity begins

1545	Council of Trent (counter-reformation)
1559	Calvin sends out missionaries, "Forbidden Books"
1566	Latin mass standardized
1633	Trial of Galileo
1789	French Revolution fractures church
1814	Second Spanish Inquisition begins
1854	Dogma of the Immaculate Conception
1858	Apparitions of Mary in Lourdes, France
1869	Vatican I (papal primacy, dogma of infallibility)
1917	Apparitions of Mary in Fatima, Portugal
1950	Dogma of the Assumption of Mary
1962	Second Vatican council
1967	Catholic Renewal Movement begins
1970	Revision of Roman missal in vernacular
1978	Pope John Paul II chosen
1992	New Catechism of the Catholic Church
1994	Evangelicals and Catholics Together
2005	Pope John Paul II dies, Benedict XVI chosen
2008	Solemn declaration by between pope and Muslims
2013	Pope Benedict XVI resigns, February 11;Pope Francis chosen as 266th pope, March 13

9A. #19 - Trent (1545-63)

10A. #20 - Vatican I (1869-70)

11A. #21 - Vatican II (1962-65)

MAJOR THEOLOGICAL ISSUES THAT SEPARATE EVANGELICALISM AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The Doctrine of Authority

1A. The Personal Authority of the Bishop of Rome

2A. The Pope and Apostolic Succession

3A. The collective teaching authority of the bishops

4A. The authority of the inspired Word of God

- 5A. A biblical response
 - 1B. Concerning Peter
 - 1C. Scripture gives no indication that Peter was fulfilling a role like that of pope
 - 2C. There is no indication of the papal office in general
 - 3C. There is no mention of supremacy among the apostles
 - 4C. Matthew 16 does not make Peter the primary apostle or pope
 - 5C. In the Greek - petros vs. petra
 - 6C. Aramaic - same word and it was a word play
 - 7C. The Greek had to change the words or Peter would have been identified with a feminine name - so Jesus was probably referring to Peter
 - 8C. Some try to make it the confession
 - 9C. It was probably intentionally ambiguous
 - 10C. But the solution is in Ephesians 2:19-22
 - 11C. The church will be built on Jesus and the apostles as a group - with Jesus being the main cornerstone. There is only one main cornerstone. After you set the first one - it doesn't matter
 - 12C. There is no convincing scriptural or historical evidence the Peter was ever in Rome
 - 13C. Peter was not infallible with regards to faith and practice (cf. Gal. 2)
 - 2B. Concerning bishops and apostolic succession
 - 1C. The apostolic office was unique: Acts 1:21-22, 2 Cor 12:12
 - 2C. There is no Biblical instruction or even reference to apostolic succession
 - 3C. No mention of any relationship between the office of bishop and apostle
 - 3B. Concerning Scripture and Tradition
 - 1C. Scripture alone is given as the rule of faith (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- 2C. There are warnings against adding / subtracting from specific portions of the Word of God (Deu 4:2, Rev 22:18-19) - and a principle seems to be indicated
- 3C. When Jesus was tempted he quoted Scripture
- 4C. NT writers quote Scripture
- 5C. No indication that traditions are anything other than traditions of men
- 6C. The references to tradition are both negative and positive (negative when they violate Scriptural principles - positive when they are consistent with them)
- 7C. No references to tradition that indicate that it was revelatory

6A. Questions to ask

- 1B. If Peter was supreme among the disciples - why do they continue to debate the issue (Luke 22:24-30)?
- 2B. Why is Paul and not Peter the most prominent figure after Acts 13 and why is Paul the prominent NT theologian?
- 3B. When Iranaeus listed 12 bishops of Rome (2nd century) why did he not list Peter?
- 4B. Did you know that the New Testament never refers to any leader in a local church as a priest, including the apostles?
- 5B. Given the meaning of “thoroughly equipped” in 2 Tim 3:16-17, how does one explain the need for something apart from and in addition to Scripture?
- 6B. Why does Scripture never equate Tradition with the Word of God?

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

- 1A. Categories of sin
 - 1B. Original sin

 - 2B. Mortal sin

 - 3B. Venial sin

- 2A. The Seven Sacraments
 - 1B. Baptism

 - 2B. Confirmation

 - 3B. Penance

 - 4B. Eucharist

 - 5B. Marriage

6B. Holy Orders

7B. Anointing the Sick

3A. The doctrine of salvation: Sin and the sacraments

4A. The doctrine of purgatory

5A. The doctrine of hell

6A. The Communion of the Saints

7A. Limbo

8A. A biblical response

9A. Questions to ask

THE DOCTRINE OF THE MASS

- 1A. The first Mass

- 2A. The real sacrifice

- 3A. The effects of Holy Communion

- 4A. The Real Presence and John ch. 6

- 5A. Transubstantiation: Aristototele's Pre-Scientific Ontology

- 6A. A biblical response

- 7A. Questions to ask

THE DOCTRINE OF MARY

1A. The Immaculate Conception

2A. Mother of God

3A. Perpetual Virginity

4A. Co-redeemer

5A. Queen of Heaven

6A. Our Lady of . . .

7A. Her intercession

8A. Her appearances

9A. A biblical response

10A. Questions to ask

THE ISSUE OF ECUMENICAL COOPERATION

- 1A. ECT: "Evangelicals and Catholics Together"
- 1B. The main issues

- 2B. Evaluation

- 2A. Two important questions for Evangelicals
- 1B. Should Evangelicals work with Catholics?

- 2B. Should Evangelicals evangelize Catholics?

MINISTRY TO CATHOLICS

- 1A. Develop personal relationships
- 2A. People are not “projects”
- 3A. Do not assume all Catholics believe the same thing
- 4A. Be knowledgeable, yet humble
- 5A. Capitalize on areas of agreement
- 6A. Define your terms, but avoid debates
- 7A. Encourage an examination of beliefs
- 8A. Ask leading questions
- 9A. Be kind and patient - don't give up
- 10A. They may initially become better Catholics
- 11A. Remember the difference between evangelism and discipleship
- 12A. Understand that family conflicts may develop