



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

May 27, 2018

Shared Beliefs between Roman Catholics and Protestants

Recommended Book

- ***Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*** by Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie (Baker Books, 1995).
- **James Akin, Roman Catholic, Catholic Answers Senior Apologist**
“This book offers a comprehensive and **balanced discussion** and **should retire older, sensationalistic works.**”

Summary of Agreements

“**What evangelicals have in common with Roman Catholics...** this includes the **great fundamentals of the Christian faith**, including a belief in the **Trinity**, the **virgin birth**, the **deity of Christ**, the **creation** and subsequent **fall** of humanity, **Christ’s unique atonement** for our sins, the physical **resurrection** of Christ, the necessity of **God’s grace** for salvation, the existence of **heaven** and **hell**, the **second coming** of Christ, and the verbal inspiration and infallibility of **Scripture.**” (Geisler, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 155)

Areas of Agreement

Shared Beliefs on the Bible

High View of Scripture

- “The [Catholic] **Church** has always **venerated the divine Scriptures.**” (Vatican II)

Scripture is inspired (“from God”)

- Inspiration deals with the **source of the Bible**: it’s from God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).
- **Prophets were mouthpieces** for God (2 Sam. 23:2; Heb. 1:1; Dt. 18:18; “thus says the Lord” x 1700).

- First Vatican Council: The Old and New Testaments were “written under **the inspiration of the Holy Spirit**... they have God as their author.”

Scripture is infallible (“cannot fail or be broken”).

- Jesus said it has **divine authority** (“it is written,” Mt. 4:7).
- Jesus said it **cannot perish** (“not on jot or tittle will pass away until all fulfilled,” Mt. 5:17-18)
- Jesus said it **cannot be broken** (Jn. 10:35).

Scripture is inerrant (“without error”):

- Jesus called it **true** (Jn. 17:17).
- Jesus implied it’s **scientifically accurate** by affirming creation account and Adam/Eve.
- Jesus implied it’s **historically reliable** by also affirming Noah, Jonah, Abraham, etc.
- “They [the Scriptures] **contain revelation without error** . . . because having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they have God as their author.” (Vatican I)

Shared Beliefs on God

God’s nature

- Protestants and Catholics hold the **same view of God**.
- Both affirm **the Trinity**: there’s one essence of God in 3 distinct persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).
- Both deny:
 - **Tritheism** (Father, Son, Spirit are three separate gods).
 - **Modalism** (there’s one God who plays 3 different roles).

God’s qualities (attributes)

- Both believe God has two broad categories of qualities.
- God has **incommunicable qualities** only He Himself has. These are **God’s metaphysical qualities**.
- God has **communicable qualities** He gives to His creatures. These are **God’s moral qualities**.

Who God is (metaphysical qualities)

God is one	Self-existent
Infinite	Simple
Immutable	Eternal
Omnipresent	Omniscient
Omnipotent	

What God does (moral qualities)

God is holy	Righteous
Just	Perfect
Truthful	Loving
Merciful	Righteous Jealousy

(God can give us these qualities)

Shared Beliefs on Creation

Creation out of nothing

- Both agree God created the universe *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing” (Gen. 1:1).
- This contrasts with *ex materia* (“from matter”) and *ex deo* (“from God”).
- “All that exists outside God was, in its whole substance, **produced out of nothing by God** (De fide).” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 79)

Genesis 1-3 describes real events

- Catholics must agree that Genesis 1-3 contain **narratives of real events**... no myths, allegories or legends. However, they are permitted to believe in **evolution**. (Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, no. 2123)

Creation originally good

- Both believe **world created good**
- And **evil** came as result of the Fall (Gen. 1:31; Rom. 8:20).

Shared Beliefs on Humanity

Historicity of Adam & Eve

- Both believe the **Genesis account** of origin of mankind (Adam/Eve, the Fall).
- “The **First Man** was created by God (De fide).” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 94)
- “The whole human race stems from **one single human pair**.” (Ibid., p. 96)

Image of God

- Humans were created in the **image of God** (Gen. 1:26).

The Fall

- Both believe in **the Fall** of mankind because of sin.
- **Death is the punishment** for sin (Council of Trent).
- Agree the **Fall affected all areas**: spiritual, physical, social and intellectual.

Original Sin

- Roman Catholics also believe in **original sin** (all people are born in sin; Rom. 5:12).
- Have their own Calvinists called “Thomists” which emphasis man’s total inability to come to God.
- They also have those like Arminians called “Molinists” who emphasize man can cooperate with God.

Shared Beliefs on Christ

The Incarnation of Christ

- The **second person** of the Trinity (Christ) took on a human body and nature.
- Since then Christ has had **two natures** (human and divine).
- “There was **full divinity** and **full humanity** united in **one person** forever.”
- This is called the “hypostatic union.”
- Divine nature: John 1:1; 10:30-33; 20:28; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:3,8
- Human nature: Luke 2:7; John 1:14; Phil. 2:7; Gal. 4:4; 1 Jn. 4:2.

The Virgin birth

- Jesus conceived in Mary’s womb by the **Holy Spirit**, not a human father.
- The **miracle** of the virgin birth (Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-38).

The Resurrection

- The miracle of the **resurrection** of Christ (Mt. 28; Mk. 16; Luke 24; John 20; Acts 1)

The Sinlessness of Christ

- Jesus was **born without sin** (Lk. 1:35).
- And he did not commit any sin but was **morally perfect** in every way (1 Pet. 1:19; Jn. 8:6).

Shared Beliefs on Salvation

Salvation is an area of big differences, but we do have things in common...

Salvation is historical

- Both believe salvation is historical.
- **God intervened in history** by sending His Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 4:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:15).
- **Future event** of salvation will happen at Jesus’ second coming.
- Point: salvation is based on historical event of resurrection.

Salvation is by God's grace

- Both believe salvation is only **by means of God's grace**.
- But there's **big disagreement** over **how this grace is obtained**.
- **Catholics** believe the **sacraments** are vehicles of grace.
 - A person **must receive** the sacraments to obtain God's grace.
 - They also believe **works are necessary for salvation**.
- **Protestants** also believe salvation is by grace but this grace is received **through faith alone**
(Rom. 1:16-17; 4:5; 5:1; 9:30; 10:4; 11:6; Gal. 3:24; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9)

Shared Beliefs on the Church

Church built on Christ

- We both believe the church is **built on Christ**, the chief cornerstone (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20)

Jesus is the head

- Roman Catholics call **Jesus the invisible head** (saying pope is visible head).
- Protestants tend to say Jesus is both visible and invisible head.

There's an invisible aspect

- Both Protestants and Catholics believe there is a **visible and invisible aspect** to the church.
- The Roman Catholic Church believes they are **the only true visible** manifestation of the body of Christ on earth. Protestants disagree.
- But Roman Catholics **acknowledge invisible side** to the church too.

Protestant use of "catholic"

- Ignatius was first to use "**Catholic Church**" (107AD) and this use simply means "**universal**."
- Even Protestants recite the **Apostles' Creed**: "I believe in... the holy catholic Church."

Shared beliefs on Eschatology

(Personal Eschatology)

Destiny sealed by death

- Both believe there's **no chance for salvation after death** (Heb. 9:27).

Heaven

- Both believe in **heaven**.

- Catholic dogma proclaims that “the bliss of Heaven lasts **for all eternity** (De fide).”
(Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 478)

Hell

- Both believe **hell lasts for all eternity**.
- Official Roman Catholic position: “The souls of those who die in the condition of personal grievous sin enter Hell... the punishment of Hell lasts for all eternity (De fide).” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 479)
- (Note: Protestants and Eastern Orthodox **reject purgatory**.)

Rewards

- Both believe in **degree of rewards** for the saved.
- “The degree of perfection of the **beatific vision** granted to the just is proportioned to each one’s merits (De fide).” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 478)

(Cosmic Eschatology)

Second Coming

- Both believe Christ will **return bodily from heaven** at the **second coming** of Christ.

Timing

- Like many evangelicals, Roman Catholics believe **Jesus can return at any moment** (this is called the **imminency of Christ**).
- Catholics also stress words of Christ that “**no one knows**” (Mt. 24;36; Mk. 13:32)
- There is no official view regarding **premillennialism**, but most Catholics continue to hold **amillennial view** (following Augustine).

Resurrection

- Catholic dogma: “**All the dead will rise again** on the last day with their bodies” (*Fundamentals*, 488)

Judgment

- Roman Catholics believe there will be **one general judgment** at the end of time after Christ’s Second Coming. **Amillennial protestants** agree.
- In contrast, **Dispensational protestants** see up to five judgments (believers, Israel, Gentiles, angels, White Throne).

New heaven/earth

- Both believe this **present world will be destroyed** and recreated (2 Pet. 3:7,12-13; Rev. 21).

Will look at Big Differences Next Week!

Despite having much in common there are big differences. Summary from book: “...there are some significant differences between Catholics and evangelicals on some important doctrines. Catholics affirm and evangelicals reject the **immaculate conception** of Mary, her **bodily assumption**, her role as corredemptrix, the **veneration of Mary** and other saints, prayers to Mary and the saints, the **infallibility of the pope**, the existence of **purgatory**, the inspiration and canonicity of the **Apocrypha**, the doctrine of **transubstantiation**, the worship of the transformed Host, the special sacerdotal powers of the Roman Catholic **priesthood**, and the **necessity of works** to obtain eternal life.” (Geisler, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, p. 155)

Bibliography

Geisler, Norman L. *Systematic Theology: Volume Four: Church, Last Things*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2002.

Geisler, Norman L., and Ralph E. MacKenzie. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995.

Ott, Ludwig. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*. 4th ed. St. Louis: TAN Books and Publishers, 2009.

Class Schedule

Overview of Church History

May 13: Early Fathers, Theologians and Councils

May 20: Events of the Reformation

May 27: Shared Beliefs between Roman Catholics and Protestants

Jun. 3: Overview of Key Differences

Jun. 10: Origin of Denominations Since the Reformation

If you know somebody who would be blessed by this class, feel free to invite them; visitors welcome at any time!

Where: Sundays second service (10:45AM) in the upstairs chapel building room C-205B