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Romanism Versus Christianity

Intro:

There are many Christians today who think that the Roman Catholic Church is a Christian church and that people can get saved by being a member of it and by holding to its teachings. As always personal issues are never the issue, but what does the Word of God have to say on this matter.

People make decisions, exercise their faith and follow certain paths in their lives based upon certain things they believe. One individual may believe what the Roman institution teaches and base their life upon that. While another individual may, instead, base his or her life only on what the Bible teaches.

It is a big decision, for all eternity will be determined on what you believe and do in this life! So, what we intend to do is bring out the sacraments that the Roman, Eastern and even some Western churches teach on this matter and we will compare these sacraments to what the Bible teaches.

Before we look at their teachings on their sacraments we need to understand the definition of a sacrament. A sacrament is a rite by which the sanctifying grace of God is conferred to an individual. It is performed by a priest, which also means that one would need the Roman church and its priesthood to receive the grace of God.

But the Bible teaches that the grace of God is conferred to us through faith in Christ! *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”* Ephesians 2:8. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”* Romans 5:1. *By faith* in the original is *ek pisteos*, which tells us that grace is conferred to an individual out of the source of faith in Christ!

There are many passages in the Bible that teach the same thing, but suffice it to say that the Bible teaches that **God's grace is not conferred through any man, or rite on earth, but only through faith in Christ.** That's the biblical position, but as always, people have to make their own choices in life. It goes back to do we want to base our lives and eternity on what men may tell us, or on what the Word of God says?

1. The Sacrament of Baptism

Is one of the seven channels through which one hopes to have grace conferred to the individual. In this the individual, even an infant, has its head anointed with oil and salt is put in its mouth to exorcise any demons and to prevent the individual from future influence of evil spirits. Then the individual is baptized where it is supposedly cleansed

of original sin and becomes a member of the Roman Catholic Church. At this moment of baptism the individual is supposed to be “*born again*” and a member of the Catholic church. **But saying that one is “born again” and actually being born again are two different things.**

While the Bible teaches something entirely different. It teaches that we are born again by faith in Christ. “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” 1 Peter 1:23. John chapter three is dealing with the matter of being born again and Christ culminates it in verse sixteen saying that it is done through faith in Christ! “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

On the matter of baptism we see that it is to be done only **after one is saved** and is a picture of what has taken place in the believer's salvation, and what will take place at the believer's resurrection. Grace is not conferred through baptism, and salvation does not come through baptism. Grace comes to us through faith in Christ, just as salvation comes to us through faith in Christ.

By submitting to water baptism the believer is publicly stating that he or she has believed on Christ and at the end of their life Christ will raise them from the dead. “*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*” Acts 2:41 “*And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*” Acts 8:36-38.

We notice that they all **were of the age** where they could make a personal decision to believe on Christ; they believed on Christ as their Savior; and afterward they submitted to water baptism in obedience to the Lord. Peter tells us that water baptism does not take away the filth of the flesh, that is the old sin nature found in everyone of us, but is an answer of a good conscience toward God. “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*” 1 Peter 3:21.

There is also another baptism that believers go through, a baptism that occurs at the moment of their faith in Christ, and that is a spiritual baptism where we are placed into the body of Christ. In this spiritual baptism we become identified with Christ's crucifixion, his death, his resurrection from the dead and his ascension into heaven. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the*

body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Romans 6:3-6.

2. The Sacrament of Penance

The sacrament of penance is the rite that deals with an individual's personal sins that they may commit after baptism. In this the individual must examine their conscience, be sorry for their sins, purpose not to sin again, confess their sins to a priest and perform the penance that the priest gives them. They must also confess all sins since their last confession.

The biblical position is quite different. First of all it teaches that all believers in Christ **are priests!** We represent ourselves to God. *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”* 1 Peter 2:9.

Secondly, it teaches that Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father, not some other man. *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* 1 John 2:1,2

An *advocate*, *parakletos*, is the idea of a defense attorney. Jesus Christ is the one who represents us legally before the judgment bar of the Father, not some man on earth, not some institution on earth. The word propitiation is *hilasmos* and it means the satisfaction. Christ is the legal satisfaction for God's righteousness. His atoning death on the cross completely satisfied the justice of God. It is insult to God's justice and grace to think that our pitiful penance and sorrow for sins could ever satisfy God's righteousness and replace the work Christ did on our behalf on the cross.

Then there is the matter of confession of sin. Are we to confess it to a man? Or are we to confess it to God? 1 John 1:9 says that we are to confess it to God, *“If we confess our sins, (maybe we will and maybe we won't, but if we do), he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

The word for *confess* is *homologeō* and it means to state, to admit, to cite a legal court precedence. It is entirely an objective matter. Concepts concerning the emotions, sorrow, feeling sorry for the sin we have committed are not in it at all. One may feel sorry about what they have done, but it isn't the sorrow that brings forgiveness and cleansing from God, but the objective stating of the sin to God that does!

Even the matter of repentance is not what people think it is. They think that it refers to having regret for what one has done, that they must feel sorry about it. But the word *repent* comes from the word *metanoēō* which means to have a change of mind! And this change of mind is always toward Bible Doctrine. If a believer in Christ repents, it means that he or she has gone positive to the doctrinal teaching of God's Word. *Metamelomai* means to regret what one has done, which is what Judas did.

The Bible clearly teaches that penance, sorrow for sins, all those other matters have nothing to do with getting God to forgive us. If we want him to forgive us, we must do it his way! And his way is to confess that sin to him. Maybe we will, and maybe we won't. But if we do, then he will forgive us and cleanse us.

This verse is a conditional sentence and the condition for forgiveness from God for the believer is to confess our sins to him; to him and no one else. If we fulfill the condition of naming the sin to God, he will fulfill his part by forgiving it.

3. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

In this sacrament, also referred to as Holy Communion, the priest is supposed to turn the disc shaped wafer and the wine into the actual body and blood of the Lord! They are taught to believe that the two become the actual body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. It is then placed into a sunburst design called the monstrance where it must be worshipped. When the adherent of Romanism eats the wafer they believe that they are actually “receiving Jesus” as their Savior, for he is allegedly contained in it.

This is not what biblical Christians believe and practice. First of all, we do not use a wafer; we actually use unleavened bread. Secondly, we do not use wine, but grape juice. The reason for this is that the process of fermentation is used in both normal bread and wine, and fermentation has the symbolic idea of the leaven of sin. So to keep the typology that Christ was without sin, we use juice and unleavened bread.

Secondly, we do not teach that the bread and grape juice that are used in the Communion Supper are turned into the body and blood of Christ. We teach that it is **a remembrance of Christ's work on the cross for us.** *“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”* 1 Corinthians 11:24-26

We do teach the significances of both the bread and the juice. We teach that the bread **represents** the body of Christ in its sinlessness, that Christ was sinless in everything that he said and did, and that his body did not have an old sin nature. We also teach that the juice represents the blood of Christ that was shed for our sins, and that it refers to his atoning death on the cross for our sins.

We also go into the age old aspects of the covenant ceremony. In the old testament, when two parties entered into covenant with each other, there was a celebration of that covenant by having a covenant supper. So by believers in Christ sharing in the same covenant meal with the others present, they are saying that they are in covenant with Christ.

There is also the symbolism of faith there by eating the elements. Eating being a type of faith, and so by eating the bread and drinking the juice, that individual is saying that I have received Christ by faith! In Romanism they are taught that they *receive Christ* by

eating the wafer, while in biblical Christianity the Bible teaches that we receive Christ by faith. The difference is dramatic and obvious. One is true the other is false.

4. The Sacrament of Confirmation

At the sacrament of confirmation the priest slaps the individual on the face and by this he or she is supposed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and becomes a citizen of the Roman Catholic Church. But the Bible clearly teaches that our citizenship is in heaven, not Rome! "*For our **conversation** is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*" Philippians 3:20 The word *conversation* is *politeuma* and it refers to one's citizenship.

So, when they are baptized, according to Romanism, they are supposed to be **born again**. When they eat the disc wafer they are supposed to be **receiving Jesus Christ** into them. And when they are confirmed they are supposed to **receive the filling of the Holy Spirit**. But the Bible teaches that we are **born again by faith** in Jesus Christ; we **receive Jesus Christ by faith**; and we are **filled with the Holy Spirit by faith**. Romans 15:13 tells us that the filling of the Holy spirit comes in the sphere of faith, "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*" εν τω πιστευειν, *en to pisteuein*, is in the sphere of believing.

So, on the one hand we have man attempting to have God's grace conferred through made works of religion in rituals, and on the other hand we have God's grace conferred to individuals through the exercise of faith. Faith in Christ, first of all, to receive God's grace and forgiveness, and then faith afterward in our post salvation experience. **The Bible is clear on these matters, but the individual must make their own choice.**

5. The Sacrament of Matrimony

Catholics receive the sacrament of matrimony when they marry a baptized Roman Catholic witnessed and performed by a priest. Again, they teach that grace is conferred through a sacrament.

But the Bible teaches that marriage is a covenant union between a man and a woman. It isn't made any holier or blessed by God if it is done in a church or outside of a church. It really is a private matter between a man and a woman. But it does have certain things required in it. It is to be a life long union; it is to be monogamous; the man is to provide for the family; the woman is to take care of the home; and the woman is to be in submission to the authority of her husband.

The blessings of grace come to the husband and wife, not because they are married in a Church, but if they both believe on Jesus Christ as their Savior and base their marriage on what the Bible teaches.

6. The Sacrament of Holy Orders

This sacrament deals only with the men who will carry out their duties in the Roman Catholic Institution, such as priests, cardinals, bishops, etc.. Yet this is entirely different from what God states in his Word.

The Bible teaches that, first of all, all believers in Christ are priests, and not just some group of men. Young, old, male, female, all believers in Christ are the priests of God. This means that they represent themselves to God personally. And therefore have no need of a separate priestly class to go through. *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”* 1Peter 2:9

Secondly, the Bible teaches that there is a grouping of communicators, whose function in the Church is to teach God's Word. They have the ability to teach God's Word because God, not man or some institution, has given them the spiritual gift to do so. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”* Ephesians 4:11,12.

These four spiritual gifts are for the purpose of communicating the Word of God; they are sovereignly bestowed on the individual by the Holy Spirit at the time of their salvation and they are given only to certain male believers in Christ. The development of these gifts comes through their intake of Bible Doctrine and being trained in the sound exegesis of God's Word, preferably in the original languages. The Bible does not teach that God has given any such a gift as pope, or cardinal to the church.

The Bible clearly teaches in 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:11,12 and many other places, that God chooses those men he wants to serve him in the area of the communication of his Word, (he actually chose us to this position of service and honor back in eternity past), that he sovereignly bestowed upon us the spiritual gift he wanted us to have, he did this at salvation, even assigning us to the specific area of ministry chosen for us.

7. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction

Also known as “The Anointing of the Sick” is a ritual performed for one in the Catholic church who is seriously ill and who has received six of the seven sacraments. It is performed by a Catholic priest for the purpose of giving spiritual aid and comfort and to perfect spiritual health, including, if needed the remission of sins, and hopefully to restore physical health.

The priest anoints the eyes, ears, nose, lips, hands, feet, and with men the loins with oil, all accompanied by the prayer, "Through this holy unction and His own most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins or faults thou hast committed [quidquid deliquisti] by sight [by hearing, smell, taste, touch, walking, carnal delectation]".

The Bible's approach is very different. In the matter of sin, placing oil on us and saying a prayer will not get our sins forgiven. 1 John 1:9 tells us that our sins as believers are forgiven only **when we confess them to God**. God forgives sins and he tells us how it is done if he is to do it! *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,*

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Secondly, the perfecting of our spiritual health only comes about as we metabolize Bible Doctrine by faith under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Only doctrine resident in the inner man can impart health to the new nature. Spiritual health comes about for the believer-priest as he or she is under the ministry of a local church that teaches Bible Doctrine, and as that believer metabolizes it by faith.

There is an anointing with oil in the Bible for those who are sick found in James 5:14,15, *“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”*

In this matter the oil was not symbolic, nor was it was not a mere ritual. The oil applied in those days was what we know today to be essential oils. It was not just dropped on, or applied, but rubbed into the appropriate area, and it was applied first before the prayer. The prayer was a prayer of faith, which tells us that it was **the faith of the elders, not the sick believer that was in view**. (Kind of puts a new spin on all these so-called “faith healers”).

We need to notice that in all these areas that we have studied there are two contrasting things in view. On the one hand we have an institution and ritual, and on the other hand the biblical view is always a matter of **faith!**

8. Purgatory

The Bible clearly departs from Romanism in this matter of where do believers go after they die. It teaches that believers in Christ are face to face with Jesus Christ in heaven, *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”* 2 Corinthians 5:8 While Romanism teaches that they go to a state and place called Purgatory where the soul suffers for a period of time before it goes to heaven.

Nowhere in the Bible is Purgatory ever mentioned, not one place. The word comes from purging us of our sins, but what this denies is the finished work of Christ on the cross for our sins. But in John 19:30, when Christ cried out, **“It is finished”**, he was saying that the full penalty for our sins had been paid! *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”*

Christ died once, one time for our sins, *“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”* Hebrews 7:27 *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* Hebrews 10:10

In the early church, after the Apostles, there were **three views** on what happened to the soul after death. They all believed in death, in Christ coming back to earth to raise the dead, in God's judgment, Hell and the Lake of Fire. But they did not all agree on what happened to the soul after the Great Judgment. But they did believe that the saved went to Heaven while the unsaved went to Hell.

The **Conditional View** believed that all believers in Christ went to heaven at the moment of their physical death, they also believed that the souls of the unsaved were totally

consumed by the Lake of Fire. Many held to this view then and they still do today.

The **Traditional View** believed that all believers in Christ went to heaven at the moment of their death also, but they believed that the souls of the unsaved would be burning for all eternity in the Lake of Fire. Many held to this view also back then, as many do today. Jean Calvin believed it and taught it and it was the view of the Reformation.

The **Restorationist View**, from to restore, believed that all believers went to a place called Purgatory at their death to purge them from their sins. How long they stayed there was dependent on certain factors. Very, very few believed this back then and the ones that did were outside the mainstream of Christianity, but apparently Romanism holds to its concept today.

The Bible clearly teaches that all believers in Christ, though, go to be with the Lord at the moment of their death. They are in Christ, and they are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This is made possible by the finished work of Christ on the cross in regards to their sins, their being forgiven by God and their legal standing of righteousness through God's legal declarative act of justifying them.

The Bible is very clear that eternal life comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by following the rituals of some man made institution. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John 3:36 “ That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:15 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 “ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:40 “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” 1 John 5:11-13*

The contrasts between Romanism and biblical Christianity are many and obvious. One teaches that God's grace is conferred by an institution of men performing rites, while biblical Christianity teaches that God gives grace to man through faith in Christ, and afterward keeps on giving us grace through faith in his Word in our post salvation experience.

Many Christians today have been deceived into thinking that Romanism is Christianity, but when you compare what it teaches with the biblical position it is clear that it has nothing in common with true Christianity. Nothing. When it comes down to it, though, who are you going to believe? Are you going to believe what God says in his Word? Or are you going to believe what an institution of men say? What you believe will determine where you spend all eternity! *“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Acts 16:30,31.*

