

This chart is from [Wikipedia](#)

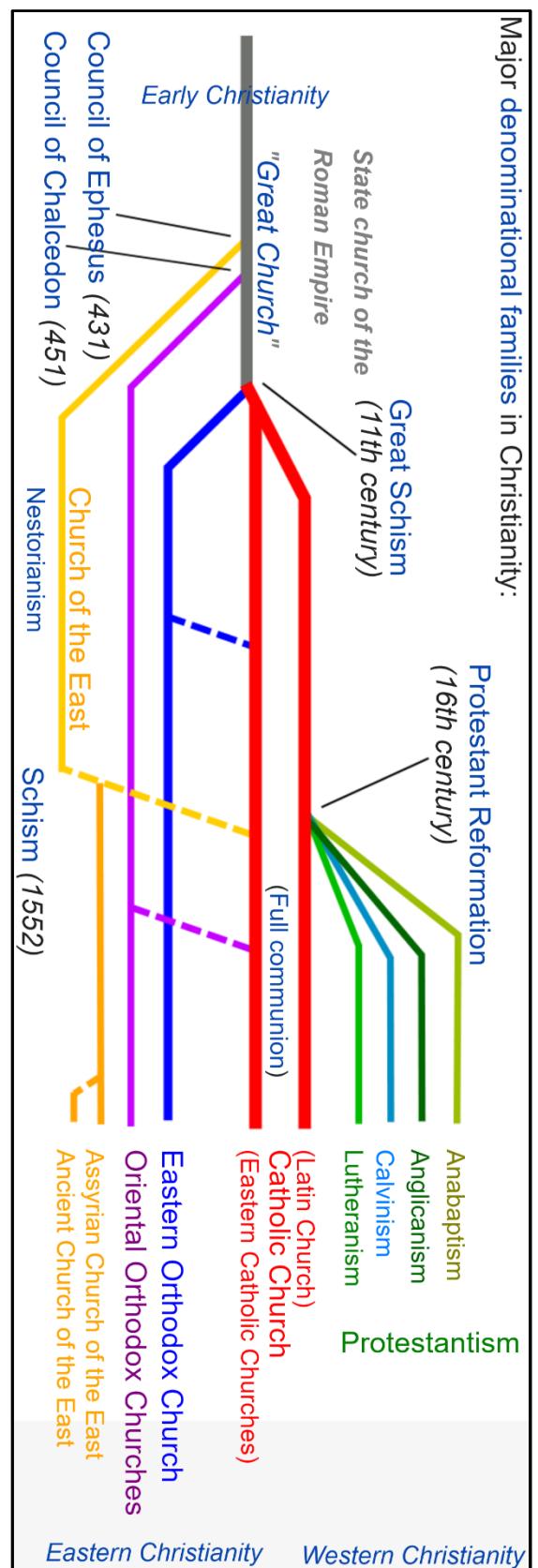
The separate handout, *Church History at a Glance*, is a chart compiled by the late Donald W. Kies (of Grace Bible Church, Elmhurst) in 1980. He beautifully depicts how Christianity evolved in its two millennia, specifically into its many factions.

The chart to the right summarizes it.

I love this chart because it helps me defend against the often-stated position that “the Roman Catholic Church is the one true church founded by Jesus Christ.” Some things that become obvious from the chart are:

- Interestingly, the 3 branches of Christianity each took about 500 years to form:
 - ~500AD Catholicism
 - ~1000AD Orthodox
 - ~1500AD Protestantism.
- Church groups with evangelical beliefs existed prior to the Reformation (shown in red). They never really died out, but often lived in the shadow of the dominant churches. Sometimes groups were nearly exterminated (e.g. “The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre was a violent attack by Catholics on the Protestant minority beginning in Paris and spreading out to other French cities, killing between 10,000 and 30,000 people over three months.” [\(website\)](#))
- The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) wasn’t the only church around in any given era; it begins to take its form in the 400’s (roughly coinciding with the fall of the Roman Empire).
- Christianity in the first 500 years didn’t look anything at all like today’s RCC. (See a [website](#) that makes the case that early Christianity came before Catholicism.)

Dr. William Webster wrote an excellent chapter in the book *Roman Catholicism* from Moody Press—its title was “Did I Really Leave the Holy Catholic Church?” In it he shows over and over again, that while the Catholic Church *claims* it only teaches what has been believed by all Christians everywhere, the historical facts show otherwise. For example, the table on the next 2 pages (compiled from various sources) show that many of the Catholic teachings have a relatively recently history, certainly not stemming from the apostolic age.



Year	Practice or Doctrine Introduced or Instituted
2nd century	Presbyter (or elders) were first called priests by Lucian.
300	Prayers for the dead.
375	The veneration of angels and dead saints and the use of images.
394	The Mass as a daily celebration was adopted.
416	Infant baptism by sprinkling becomes compulsory in the Western church.
431	Proclamation that infant baptism regenerates the soul.
431	The beginning of the exaltation of Mary, and the first use of the term "Mother of God" by the Council of Ephesus.
451	The worship of Mary, the mother of God instituted.
500	The Mass instituted as re-sacrifice of Jesus for the remission of sin
500	Priests began to dress different from the laity and to wear special clothes.
526	Extreme Unction (Last Rites).
593	Declaration that sin needs to be purged, established by Pope Gregory I.
593	The doctrine of purgatory was first established by Gregory the Great.
600	Prayers began to be offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels.
610	The first man was proclaimed "Pope" (Boniface III).
709	Kissing the Pope's foot begins.
788	Veneration of the cross, images, and relics authorized.
850	Holy water mixed with a pinch of salt and blessed by a priest was authorized.
890	Veneration of Saint Joseph.
927	College of cardinals begun.
995	Canonization of dead people as saints initiated by Pope John XV.
998	Fasting on Fridays and before Lent.
1000	Attendance at Mass made mandatory under the penalty of mortal sin.
1056	Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches split over papal authority, different modes of water baptism, and the veneration of dead saints and images.
1079	Celibacy of priesthood, decreed by Pope Gregory VII.
1090	The rosary, or prayer beads copied from Hindus and Muslims was introduced by Peter the Hermit.
11th century	The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice.

Year	Practice or Doctrine Introduced or Instituted
12th century	The seven sacraments defined by Peter Lombard.
1184	The Inquisition of “Heretics” was instituted by the Council of Verona. Legalized and promoted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. (Some estimate that 26 million Jews and Protestant believers were killed before it ended six hundred years later. Historian Dowling estimates 50 million since AD 606.)
1190	The sale of Indulgences established to reduce time in Purgatory.
1215	The dogma of transubstantiation decreed by Pope Innocent III.
1215	Confession of sins to the priest at least once a year was instituted by Pope Innocent III in the Lateran Council.
1220	The adoration of the wafer (host) decreed by Pope Honorius III.
1229	Laymen prohibited from having Bibles (at the Synod of Toulouse, possibly a restriction in France only).
1251	The scapular invented by Simon Stock of England.
1302	Pope Boniface VIII declares “It is necessary for salvation that all human creatures shall be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”
1414	Cup forbidden to laymen.
1438	Purgatory elevated from doctrine to dogma by Council of Florence.
1439	Dogma of sacraments affirmed.
1545	Tradition granted equal authority with the bible. (Council of Trent)
1545	The Apocryphal Books were added to the Bible by the Council of Trent.
1854	The Immaculate Conception of Mary was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX.
1864	Pope Pius IX condemns all scientific discoveries not approved by the Roman Church.
1870	Infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals proclaimed by the First Vatican Council.
1922	Virgin Mary proclaimed co-redeemer with Jesus by Pope Benedict XV.
1930	Pius XI condemned the public schools.
1931	Pius XI reaffirmed the doctrine that Mary is “The Mother of God.”
1950	Assumption of Virgin Mary into heaven, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII.
1965	Mary proclaimed the Mother of the Church by Pope Paul VI.
1985	Pope John Paul II declares that God will not forgive sins directly and that forgiveness of sins can only be obtained through a priest of the Roman Catholic Church.
1999	Pope John Paul II declares heaven, hell, and purgatory are essentially states of being, not real places.
2015	Pope Francis allows that some atheists can do good and go to heaven.

Persecution of the Early Church

- From A.D. 30 to A.D. 311, a period in which 54 emperors ruled the Empire, about a dozen harassed Christians ([website](#))
- In spite of severe opposition, the Church continued to grow until the time of Constantine when Christianity became one of the tolerated religions of the Empire. ([website](#))

The Corruption of the Church

- The Edict of Toleration in 311; Constantine's vision of the cross in 312
- Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 – the "birth certificate for religious freedom"
- Elevation of the Church as the State Religion of the Roman Empire in 380
- High view of the institutional & hierarchical church
- Necessity of baptism for salvation & hence baptism of infants was not to be denied
- Confusion of justification with sanctification

The Rise & Politicization of the Papacy

- Acknowledgement of Roman Bishop as "Pope" 450-650
- Expansion of Political Power (1000-1250) under Hildebrand (Gregory VII) & Innocent III
- Roman Church answered to God alone, no earthly rulers
- The Pope had power over all Bishops
- His feet should be kissed by "all princes"

The Seeds of Dissent (1300-1517)

- Explorers & empires
- Papal taxation & church possessions
- The rising patriotism in Europe
 - an unwillingness to submit to a foreign rule over their own national churches
 - a determination to abridge the power of the church councils, bringing the clergy under the same laws & courts with the laity
- Invention of the printing press (1450)
 - The Bible was the first book printed & became readily available
 - The Church faced an intense public scrutiny
 - Criticism of the RCC, from within & without, traveled quickly across Europe
 - Writings of the Reformers were widely circulated, criticizing the Church's corruption & preoccupation with material wealth
 - The people soon realized the papal church was far from the New Testament ideal
- The sale of Indulgences, signed by the pope himself, purporting to bestow the pardon of all sins, not only upon the holders of the certificates, but upon friends living or dead...without confession, repentance, penance, or absolution by a priest
- Clerical immorality & greed
- Sale of church offices, a practice called *simony*
- Loss of Papal prestige
 - The Crusades (1095-1291) & the Inquisitions (1184-1826)
 - The Babylonian Captivity (Popes in France, 1305-1378) & the Great Schism (1377-1417)

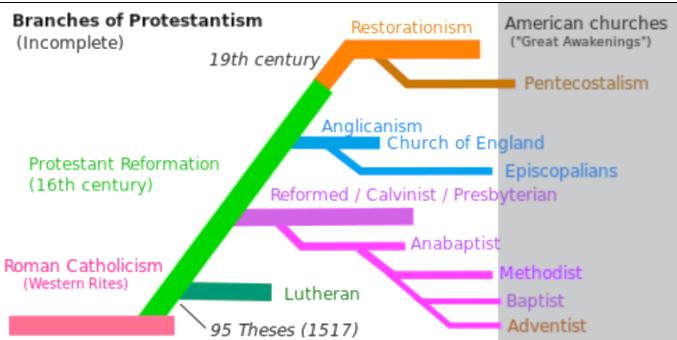
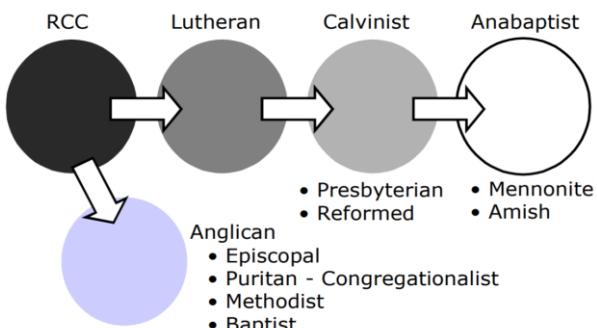
The 40-year Papal Schism (1377-1417)

- At first, there were 2 sets of Popes (at Rome & at Avignon, France)
 - Each excommunicated the other
 - Often 2 priests at each parish
 - Council at Pisa (1409) chose a new Pope, Alexander V, & asked the others to step down, which they refused
- Now, there were 3 Popes
 - Alexander V was poisoned by his successor, John XXIII
 - John XXIII called the Council of Constance (1414)
 - This Council deposed all 3 Popes & jailed John XXIII for 3 years for piracy, murder, rape, sodomy & incest
 - The Council also burned John Hus at the stake for preaching church reform

DATE	ROMAN POPES	AVIGNON POPES	CONCILIAR POPES
1375		GREGORY XI (1370-78) Died in 1378, setting stage for Schism	
1378		URBAN VI (1378-89) Ended "Babylonian Captivity" but caused Schism by alienating French cardinals	CLEMENT VII (1378-94) After 3 years of warfare with supporters of Urban VI, moved to Avignon in 1381
1381	BONIFACE IX (1389-1404)		
1384			
1387			
1390			
1393		BENEDICT XIII (1394-1417) Disposed by Council of Pisa in 1409, but refused to step down; Deposed by Council of Constance in 1417; returned to Spain, convinced to his dying day that he was the true pope	
1396			
1399			
1402			
1405	INNOCENT VII (1404-06)		
1408	GREGORY XII (1406-15) Deposed by Council of Pisa in 1409, but refused to step down; deposed by Council of Constance in 1415		ALEXANDER V (1409-10) Appointed by Council of Pisa
1411			JOHN XXIII (1410-15) Deposed by Constance in 1415
1414			
1417			MARTIN V (1417-31) Named by Council of Constance to end Schism
1420			
1423			

Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict), explaining why the Reformation occurred wrote:

- "For nearly half a century, the RCC was split into two or three obediences that excommunicated one another, so that every Catholic lived under excommunication by one pope or another, and, in the last analysis, no one could say with certainty which of the contenders had right on his side. The Church no longer offered certainty of salvation; she had become questionable in her whole objective form. The true Church, the true pledge of salvation, had to be sought outside the institution. It is against this background of a profoundly shaken ecclesial consciousness that we are to understand that Luther, in the conflict between his search for salvation & the tradition of the Church, ultimately came to experience the Church, not as the guarantor, but as the adversary of salvation."
- [Mark's Comment: This is quite a *mea culpa*, so I hate to make the charge that this explanation is blatantly disingenuous, but...the schism did end 100 years *before* Luther posted his theses.]



Reformation Religious Changes

From the book: *The Story of the Christian Church*

1. Scriptural Religion

- Rome had substituted the authority of the church for that of the Bible; They taught that the church was infallible, & that the authority of the Bible proceeded from its authorization by the church
- They withheld the Scriptures from the laity, & strongly opposed every translation of them into the language spoken by the common people
- The reformers declared that no doctrine was to be accepted unless it was taught in the Bible; They brought a lost Bible back to the people

2. Rational Religion

- Another principle established by the Reformation was that religion should be rational and intelligent
- Romanism had introduced irrational doctrines like transubstantiation, preposterous pretensions like papal indulgence, superstitious usages like image-worship
- The reformers demanded a creed, a discipline, and a worship that should not outrage man's rational nature

3. Personal Religion

- A third great truth made emphatic in the Reformation was that of a personal religion; Under Rome, a closed gate stood between the worshipper and God, & to that gate the priest held the only key
- God was looked upon as an unfriendly Being, who must be appeased & placated by ascetic lives; The godly-minded could not go for guidance to the Bible, but must take its teachings at second-hand, as interpreted by the church

4. Spiritual Religion

- The reformers also insisted upon a spiritual as against a formal religion
- Rome had overloaded the simplicity of the gospel with a mass of forms and ceremonies in external services rendered under priestly direction, and not in the attitude of the heart toward God
- Undoubtedly there were many, earnest spiritual natures in the RCC, but throughout the church, in general, religion was of the letter & not of the spirit

5. National Religion

- The aim of the papacy & the priesthood had been to subordinate the state to the church, & to make the pope supreme over all nations
- Wherever Protestantism triumphed, a national church arose, self-governed, & independent of Rome (the exception being the Anabaptist movement which emphasized a free church, i.e. unconnected to the state)
- The worship in every RCC was in Latin, but every Protestant Church maintained its service in the language spoken by the worshippers

- Some Papal reform regarding personal morality
- 1540: Founding of the *Society of Jesus* (Jesuits)
 - Absolute & unconditional obedience to the Pope
 - Their supreme aim: the destruction of heresy
- 1563: Council of Trent, with clarification of RC doctrine
 - Clear denunciations of Protestant beliefs, such as justification by faith alone
 - Adding of the Apocryphal books to the Bible
- Rejuvenation & reorganization of the Inquisition
- 1559: Issuing of the *Index of Forbidden Books* (this Index only ended in 1966)
- “Wars of Religion” leading to forced re-conversion of certain areas of Europe from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism

From a great article: [Civilization & the Protestant Reformation](#)

- Civilization as we know it began on October 31, 1517.
- The debate Martin Luther began nearly 500 years ago turned the world upside down. Democracy, civil rights & liberties, constitutional government, religious liberty, & the free market all find their roots in the Reformation.
- His second major contribution to Western political thought was the idea of a written constitution—the Bible—limiting the power & authority of church (& later political) leaders. There is a direct connection between the Reformation cry of *sola Scriptura* & the American idea of the Constitution—not any man or body of men—as the supreme law of the land.
- By articulating the Biblical doctrine of faith as wholly a gift of God, Luther undermined the Catholic Inquisition & formulated the theological rationale for religious liberty.
- One of Luther’s most brilliant followers, John Calvin, systematized the theology of the Reformation. The seventeenth-century Calvinists laid the foundations for both English & American civil rights & liberties: freedom of speech, press, & religion, the privilege against self-incrimination, the independence of juries, & right of habeas corpus, the right not to be imprisoned without cause. The nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke referred to Calvin as the “virtual founder of America.”
- The German sociologist Max Weber wrote a book in 1905 titled *The Protestant Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism* in which he argued that capitalism historically emerged in Protestant countries because they inculcated those virtues that led to the development of capitalism:
 - Hard work - Honesty - Frugality - Thrift - Punctuality
- These virtues, coupled with the idea of a calling, provided the impetus ending serfdom & establishing a free political & economic order. The theology & values of the Bible, rediscovered by the Protestant Reformers in the 16th century, have been the principal ideas creating what we know as Western civilization.

Halley’s Bible Commentary makes this observation: “Hinduism has made India what it is. Confucianism and Buddhism have made China what it is. Mohammedanism has made southwest Asia and north Africa what they are. Roman Catholicism has made Italy, Spain, and Latin America. Protestantism has made Britain, United States, and Canada. **These facts speak for themselves, and speak loudly.**” [emphasis in original]

From Chapter 22

- Trouble that had brewing for some time was about to boil over. First, the Greek church split off from Rome over the differences in politics, ritual, and language. Then a couple of protesters, one of them a monk (Martin Luther) and the other a king (Henry VIII), turned against the church, taking big portions of Europe with them. These events finally forced the church to examine its practices and role. Although church leaders instituted major reforms, the church never again captured the unifying power it had.

Indulge Me, One More Time

- Nobody knows when the practice of selling indulgences began, but it blossomed during the 1400s and 1500s. *Relics* of the saints were often displayed for a price and sometimes sold. Relics were a popular religious sacramental of the time. They consisted of pieces of wood, said to be from the authentic cross, or pieces of cloth, hair, or bone that were believed to belong to one of the saints. Money from the sale of these goods were used to finance the building of the cathedrals and fund the extravagant lifestyle of the clergy.
- *Indulgence* was a term that describes the remission of punishment due for sins. The church supported its belief of what was right and wrong with the idea of a punishment in the afterlife. It assigned a spiritual value to certain practices or prayers. The performance of these is said to erase spiritual debt. If a sin were committed, an indulgence is like a “get out of jail free” card from Monopoly. This practice went on until it was officially condemned in 1562, but not before it became the proverbial straw that broke the back of the Western church. Indulgences are still part of the church today; however, they are not sold.

Problems, Protest, and Protestants

- The church, having partnered with the state in the Inquisition, employed increasingly more authoritarian means to thwart any diversity of thought or question of its dogma. Its use of power and control, albeit for intended purpose of protecting the teachings of Jesus, had taken it far from its original mission.
- Against this backdrop of corruption, a sound could be heard, a tap, tap, tap in Wittenberg, a small town in Germany. The sound came from a hammer banging against the large cathedral door. When the sun rose on that October morning in 1517, it shone on a large piece of paper known as the 95 *Theses* on which were listed 95 complaints against the Catholic Church. The man who wrote the paper and nailed it to the door was Martin Luther. It was not long before the document was discussed all over Europe, and the Protestant Reformation was born.
- On the heels of Luther’s protest, Henry VIII, the king of England, broke with Rome and declared himself head of the church of England. The differences in the beginning were political rather than religious, a quarrel between the king and the pope, which was not unusual in the Middle Ages. However, this quarrel went on to result in a permanent schism.

John Calvin on the Reformation

- For Calvin, 5 prime theological concerns stood at the heart of the Reformation
 1. The Bible as the only religious authority
 2. Pure worship as God has commanded
 3. Justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ
 4. The 2 sacraments of baptism & the Lord's Supper
 5. The true pastoral teaching office for the church (teaching as opposed to mediation)
- Rome had fundamentally corrupted all of these & thus had corrupted the spirituality & morality of the church
 - The thrust of the Reformation was to restore them

Were Calvin to evaluate Rome today

- He would have to conclude that Rome & Protestantism are further apart today than they were in the 16th century
 - The Word of God is compromised not only by church traditions but also by corrosive criticism of its reliability
 - Worship has become even more syncretistic; Also the status of Mary is further elevated
 - Justification still rests on human cooperation, but it is often understood in a universalistic sense
 - The sacraments, after Vatican II, may be administered somewhat more simply, but they continue to be understood in an idolatrous and magical manner
 - The church continues to insist on the authority of its pope and traditions; Also the dogma of papal infallibility has been declared

Conclusions

- The reformers concluded: A church is a church only if:
 - the true gospel is preached
 - the sacraments are rightly administered, and
 - a biblically based church government exercises discipline over its members.
- Regarding the true gospel, the Reformation doctrine has been summed up:
"Justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone"
- This has been acknowledged by most mainstream Protestants as the article by which the church stands or falls, and the tenet that distinguishes a true from a false church.

From: religioustolerance.org/chr_capr.htm

The religioustolerance.org Web Site

- This web site is one that attempts to be fair to all religions, without taking sides. As such, it is an interesting viewpoint from someone “outside” of both the Catholic and Evangelical worlds to see how they compare the two faiths.
- [MD Note: You may not always appreciate this website’s “tolerant” (read: politically correct) slant.]

Overview

- During the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation split the unity of Christendom in western Europe. The Protestant movement further fragmented during the following centuries. At the present time, they number over a thousand Christian denominations in North America alone.
- In recent years, we have seen many debates in which both Roman Catholics and conservative Protestants have attempted to preserve certain social traditions, in opposition to liberal religious groups, feminists, gays, lesbians, and some scientists, therapists, medical personnel etc. who have tried to bring about change in society. These conflicts have encouraged increasing cooperation between Catholics and conservative Protestants on matters such as restricting abortion access, maintenance of special rights for heterosexuals, etc.
- Both sections of Christendom agree on some major theological matters, like Angels, the Crucifixion, Jesus' incarnation, bodily resurrection, and the imminent return of Jesus to earth in the second coming, Heaven, Hell, the Trinity, and the virgin birth of Jesus. They partly agree about baptism and the makeup of the Bible. But there exists a great gulf between the two groups on other matters of belief and church practice. The divisions are deep and long-standing. This has led to prejudice and discrimination. Hostility is particularly high in some countries in South America, where bloodshed has resulted. These conflicts have made it difficult for Catholics and Protestants to mount joint programs or cooperate on causes that they both support.
- Roman Catholic beliefs are compared below with those of Evangelical Christians. “...Evangelicals hold that the Catholic Church has gone beyond Scripture, adding teachings and practices that detract from or compromise the Gospel of God’s saving grace in Christ. Catholics, in turn, hold that such teaching and practices are grounded in Scripture and belong to the fullness of God’s revelation. Their rejection, Catholics say, results in a truncated and reduced understanding of the Christian reality.”

A Key Difference - Justification

- An individual is “justified” when “they are brought into right standing and into a right relationship with” God. Of all of the many points of disagreement between Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant belief, the mechanism by which a person becomes “justified” is perhaps the most important. Lutherans “refer to justification as ‘the chief doctrine upon which the church stands or falls’.”
- The “classical reformed view of Calvin and Luther” teaches that there are two steps to salvation:
 1. Each individual is hopelessly lost in sin. He/she is at enmity with God. She/he can't even understand the gospel message; it appears as foolishness to them. Thus, the Holy Spirit must first intervene and change that person's heart, so that they can begin to understand the gospel message, and develop a faith in Jesus. This is termed “regeneration” or “rebirth.”
 2. When the individual uses their newfound faith to trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior and repents of past sins, they are “justified.” This is commonly referred to as being “saved.” Salvation is a once-and-for-all change. Once a person is saved, they remain saved forever. Even if the person commits a dreadful sin in the future, their salvation remains intact.
- The Roman Catholic position is more complex:
 1. Each infant is hopelessly lost in sin. In the past, the church taught that infants are indwelled by demonic spirits that must first be exorcised.
 2. The infant is baptized, by spreading water over its face or by total immersion. By this sacrament, regeneration and justification is automatically granted to the infant.
 3. When the person attains the age where they are responsible for their actions, and commits their first mortal sin, then the justification that they obtained at baptism is destroyed.
 4. Through the sacrament of Penance (confession), if they have faith, they can have justification restored.
 5. Steps 3 and 4 are often repeated many times during their life.
- Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics believe in grace (“the free and unmerited assistance or favor or energy or saving presence of God in his dealings with humanity...”). But Evangelicals view grace as a direct action by and from God; Catholics view grace as originating from God, but flowing through the conduit of the sacraments. Evangelicals see salvation and justification as one-time events; Catholics look upon them as being repeatedly lost and potentially regained through the church's sacraments.

While we will not belittle Catholic people, the church itself has a rather dark history that cannot be simply ignored. It tells a *truth-is-stranger-than-fiction* story that is consonant with its core nature.

Political Intrigue

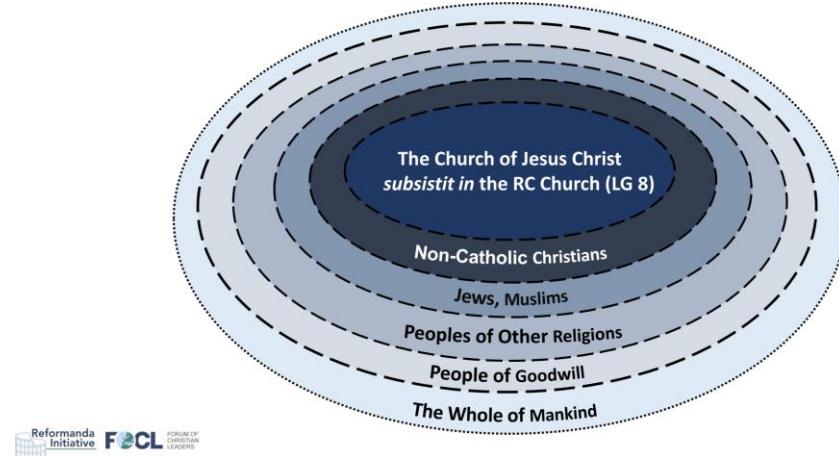
- History of the “Bad Popes” ([website 1 and 2](#))
- The 60-year “[Rule of the Harlots](#)”
- Sordid History of the Conclave ([book](#))
- King-Making and Temporal Power ([website](#))
- Papal Coronations and Church Wealth ([website](#))
- The Crusades; “[Let God sort them out](#)”
- The Inquisition; use of torture devices ([website](#))
- The Castrati and Sistine Chapel Choir ([website](#))
- History of anti-Semitism ([book](#)) ([website](#))
- Misuse of Indulgences ([website](#))
- Simony, the sale of church offices ([website](#))
- The Great Papal Schism ([website](#))
- The Counter-Reformation; the Jesuits ([website](#))
- The disingenuous practice of mental reservation, or blaming the ‘government’ for the martyrs ([website](#))
- The Great Forgeries: The Donation of Constantine ([website](#)), and the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals ([site](#))
- The myth of an unbroken chain of popes since the time of Peter ([website](#)); the anti-popes ([website](#))
- Persecution & Martyrdom of the Early Reformers (Wycliffe, Hus, etc.) ([website](#))
- The refusal to change when better interpretation of Scripture became apparent, e.g. Erasmus’ “[egg](#)”
- Protestant Martyrs & Massacres; Pronouncing anathemas on those teaching biblical truths ([website](#))
- Power struggles between the popes and the councils (who really has ultimate control?) ([website](#))
- The treatment of Galileo from 1610 to 1642 ([website](#))
- The internally contested 1890 council that pronounced papal infallibility ([website](#))
- Jesuits help start two World Wars ([website](#))
- Vatican Concordats with Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler ([book](#))
- The Post-WW II Ratline ([book](#))
- Vatican Stances on Democracy and Marxism, e.g. the 2020 *Fratelli Tutti* encyclical ([website](#))
- Scandals of the Vatican Bank ([website 1 and 2](#))
- “Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit” ([book](#)); the “Smoke of Satan in the Vatican” ([website](#))
- Placating the Tridentine ([website](#)) and Charismatic “Extremists” ([website](#))
- Staving Off Evangelical & Protestant Inroads ([website](#))
- Interfaith Dialogs and Ecumenical Ties with Non-Christian Religions ([website](#))
- Catholic voters and politicians who promote pro-choice laws, including partial-birth abortion ([website](#))
- Sexually active popes ([website](#)) and priests ([website](#))
- Prevalent Homosexuality in Seminaries ([website](#))
- Pedophile Priests and Official Coverup at the highest levels ([website](#)), e.g. McCarrick ([website](#))

Spiritual Excesses

- Extreme asceticism, e.g. [St Simeon the Stylite](#), living on a pillar for 37 years
- Self-mortification ([website 1 and 2 and 3](#))
- Self-flagellation ([website](#)) and [mock](#) crucifixion
- Wearing of the scapular; Pope JPII’s devotion to it even through surgery ([website](#))
- Crawling on knees at St. Peter’s Basilica ([website](#))
- De-sainting of St. Christopher, [and others](#)
- Self-doubt and beatification of Mother Teresa (See Appendix 3, Student Q&A’s, and [website](#))
- Liberation Theology ([website](#))
- Syncretism in Haiti ([website](#)), and Mexico ([site](#))

There is such a thing as revisionist history, and you cannot believe everything you read. For example, the old, classic, *Halley’s Bible Commentary* states forthrightly about the Reformation and its aftermath that “All told a few hundred martyrs may be charged against Protestants, at most not over a few thousand; but to Rome, untold millions:” ([related website](#)). In the newer version of the same commentary, after its rights were purchased by the evangelical BGEA, those unpleasant numbers were removed.

As Leonardo De Chirico points out in his lecture (noted above), the current Pope is taking the principles of the Vatican II church council to new lengths. In his ecumenical view, no longer is it that “Baptized and communicant people are IN, while Heretic, Pagans, and the Ex-communicated people are OUT.” Rather, all people are in the *orbit of God’s people*—some are just further away, as depicted here:



Given this viewpoint, it is natural and a good thing to dialog and worship together with people of all faiths, as the Pope did here:



In his videos, a couple interesting points he makes are:

- The Roman Catholic Church is both *Roman* and *Catholic*. Sometimes it leans more toward the *Roman* side and emphasizes the unique traditions and practices that make it different from other religions. But at other times it acts more *Catholic*, or universal, and treats the whole world as a part of God’s family. Pope Francis clearly tends to the more *Catholic* side; hence the “Brothers All” encyclical, with its promotion of open borders and socialism.

NOTE: Appendix 5 of this course material is entitled ‘*Is the Pope Catholic?*’ is Now a Serious Question. It looks at many of the criticisms about Pope Francis by people in the Catholic Church who are asking this question. To be more precise, what they *should be asking* is “Is the Pope Roman Catholic”, because he certainly is leaning toward the Catholic side.

Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT & ECT II.) There has been an ecumenical push to have Evangelicals and Catholics come to agreement. To many of us, this is very misguided. For example, John MacArthur has two 2-minute videos about this [here](#) and [here](#) and a great summary of it at this [website](#).

Internal Dissention within Catholicism

Sometimes Roman Catholic leaders get a bit snarky and make fun of the Protestant church, some even exaggerating that we have splintered into 30,000 denominations (see [website 1](#) and [2](#)).

The Catholic theologian Hans Küng admits that there is even a contradiction in his church's name. He points out that while *Catholic* means universal (or what every Christian believes), his church calls itself *Roman*, which means what that group of Catholics believe.

As an aside: Protestants hold that there is great value in the divisions that we have evolved into. It enables people who agree on major doctrines to worship with those who hold the same belief on secondary doctrines. A few notes and definitions on this:

- When a group is biblically sound in its core beliefs, we call them *orthodox* (with a small 'o').
- Groups who are unbiblical in core beliefs we call a *cult*.
- A Protestant *denomination* is a group of people who share a set of beliefs that are generally orthodox. And while it may differ with other denominations in some issues, it accepts the other denominations as legitimate expressions of the Christian faith (as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ). This is healthy. Unlike more monolithic churches, one is not pressured to attend a church that they have issues of conscience with. For example, in the mid-1800s, because not all Baptists came to see slavery as wrong at the same time, that denomination split into the Southern and Northern branches (eventually both sides came to agree on that issue, and some kind of reconciliation is probably long overdue).
- A Christian group that may be orthodox in its core beliefs, but who think that they alone have a corner on truth would be called a *sect*.

The truth is that the Roman Catholic Church is not as unified as it asserts. Currently it has a number of different 'branches' itself, including, for example:

1. Traditional or orthodox Catholicism
2. Nominal or Social Catholicism
3. Syncretistic/eclectic Catholicism (e.g. it is said that Haiti is 90% Catholic and 100% Voodoo)
4. "Moderate" Catholicism
5. Modernist, liberal Catholicism
6. Ethnic or cultural Catholicism
7. "Liberation Theology" Catholicism
8. Lapsed or Apostate Catholicism
9. Charismatic Catholicism (a Catholic website's discussion of this is [here](#))
10. "Evangelical" Catholicism (see a good article on this [here](#))
11. Evangelical "Catholicism"
12. Monastic Catholicism
13. Mystical Catholicism
14. Latin Mass/Tridentine Catholicism (a Catholic website's discussion of this is [here](#))

Finally, there are the 23 Eastern-rite Catholic churches that accept the Pope, but otherwise they have their own traditions. Of these, Vatican II asserted that the "variety" that these Eastern churches represent "within the church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it." All of the churches, the decree reinforces, are of equal dignity to each other and to the Western church, under the authority of the pope. All are encouraged to preserve and develop both their liturgy and their "way of life."

[Mark's Question: Couldn't we Protestants defend our own denominational diversity in the same way?]