



Developed and Taught by Mark Dattoli

APPENDIX 3

◀ Student Questions ▶

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D. Don't Catholics interpret the Bible differently than Protestants? How would I answer a question like: "You don't really believe that woman was made from the bone of a man, do you?"

My A.

Yes, RC generally uses a method of *allegorical interpretation* which tends to view the stories in the Bible as allegories, reflecting a spiritual meaning rather than reporting of accurate historical accounts. This has enabled the C Church to adopt Traditions that seem to flatly contradict the plain reading of the Bible. We take the Bible more at face value, interpreting it more literally, unless the text is clearly poetic, etc.

► I might reply something like this: "Well, as a RC don't you believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Isn't that just as preposterous as anything else that seems unbelievable to you? Why do you believe one and not the other? I would guess that you might also doubt similar things—like Jonah being in the large fish for 3 days? Jesus referred to that as a historical fact...do you think he was wrong? If you start dissecting the Bible into things you believe and don't believe, by what standard are you judging? Why do believe anything in the Bible then? If a church tells you what is true and what isn't, how do you know when the church is right or wrong? For me, the Bible tells me what is wrong with me and the world, and tells me what the solution is, and I have found those basic things accurate, and I have to believe it is the truth of God. I am not smart enough to judge what God has written. Jesus believed the Bible and so will I, even when I don't fully understand it all. Is this making sense to you?"

► Another way you might respond: "You've probably heard the saying that God moves in mysterious ways. Can I show you in the Bible—I'll use a copy of the Catholic Bible—what it says about God's ways? In Romans 11:34 and 1 Corinthians 2:16, a rhetorical question is asked...how can the finite mind of man understand the infinite mind of God? Don't you think that if there were no miracles recorded in the Bible, it would just be another book? Shouldn't we expect things to astound us, and confound us. I don't think I'm smart enough to question the accuracy of what God has written down in a book that has survived thousands of years. And, would you mind if I gave you a couple examples of things that faithful Catholics are supposed to believe—official *dogma*—that I find to be even more astounding than anything in the Bible? [If given permission] You have heard of the Immaculate Conception, haven't you? It's a belief unique to Catholic Tradition that when Mother Mary was conceived in her mother's womb, it was immaculate—that is conceived with no original sin, so that she could bear the sinless Jesus. According to tradition, this was Anne with her husband Joachim. Doesn't it seem a little more unbelievable that 2 sinful humans could conceive Mary than what the Bible records that the Holy Spirit of God impregnated Mary? This explains how Jesus could be born without sin, since that stain from Adam is passed to all humanity from the father's side...the Spirit replaced Joseph in the conception, so that original sin was not passed to Jesus. Does that make sense? Another example (of bigger miracles outside of the Bible than inside) is the everyday occurrence of the Catholic mass. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the central part of the mass is receiving of the actual body and blood of Jesus. You said that it's hard to believe the early chapters of the Bible, what I believe to be actual history. I understand that it can be hard to believe woman was created from the bone of a man, but it is a part of the bigger story...that just by speaking, God created the whole universe...you know, 'Let there be light and there was light.' I believe an infinitely powerful God can easily create an enormous—but finite—universe just by calling it into existence. But honestly, what I find harder to believe is that a priest, just by speaking a

few words can turn bread and wine into Jesus, that we are expected to say *Amen* ('I agree that it is the body of Christ') and bow down before it. 'God creating man' I can believe easier than 'man creating God.' Does that make sense?" [Though I would not say this, it's interesting that *Hocas Pocas*, the pretend-Latin invocation used by jugglers, is thought of by some people to be based on a perversion of the sacramental blessing from the Mass, *Hoc est corpus meum* "This is my body."]

B. Are many Catholics like the few I know who seem to follow their religion solely out of tradition, even if they don't agree with everything in the church?

My A.

If I gave only my personal opinion on this question, it would not be based on hard data. But I have elsewhere documented a RC teacher of the Catechism who spoke about his church and stated that in his opinion he thinks that only about one-tenth of Catholics practice their faith with any genuine enthusiasm. I think this seems about accurate based on a couple of things: (1) although Catholicism teaches that to miss Sunday mass without a good excuse is a mortal sin, worldwide the statistics is that only about 18% of Catholics generally attend mass each week; and (2) if you visit a Catholic church you are likely to sense a general lack of enthusiasm, with a number of people heading out the door as soon as they take the communion bread, unlike many P churches who act like 'family' and visit for a long time after the service ends. Finally, one church history book says that one of the impetuses of the Reformation was the desire of people to return to a more Scriptural, Rational, and Spiritual (non-superstitious) religion. Of course, all churches have their less-devoted "hangers-on" although perhaps not as much.

B. I've heard some people say that the Catholic Church comes across as very money hungry. Is that true?

My A.

First, that charge has been made about many churches other than the Catholic Church. Some reports ([website](#)) say that the RC church is the 3rd largest landowner in the world and owns some of the world's most exclusive artwork. *Halley's Bible Commentary* says that while Protestant explorers to the new world came for religious freedom, Catholic explorers (who didn't need the freedom) tended to settle in lands where gold had been discovered (Central and South America). Also, the Catholic Church likes to have a cathedral (built in the shape of the cross) in the home city of the bishop of each diocese—these generally are very ornate and costly, and have sometimes aroused anger or contempt in poorer areas of the world. Finally, a historically-significant event—the way funds were raised to build the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome—was an impetus for Luther's *95 Theses*, triggering the Reformation. See also this [website](#).

M. I don't get how you say you're an introvert yet walk around a church breakfast to find a stranger to talk to.

My A.

Like the actor who plays a doctor on TV, I am not an extravert, but I play one on Sunday mornings. Because I feel led to be welcoming to new people at church, I let God use my weakness and I believe he helps me be strong. But often after a busy Sunday, I do need to go home to crash and recharge my batteries (and Cathy does the same).

Q. If I visit a Catholic church, should I take communion?

My A.

No. A priest should not offer you communion if he knows you are not a Catholic. When the priest offers the bread/wafer to a communicant, he is supposed to say "The Body of Christ" and you are expected to say "Amen" which means "I agree it is the body of Christ." One Catholic website says: "Since neither Protestants nor Jews believe in the Eucharist in the same way that Catholics do, the

priest would be asking the Protestant or Jew to violate their conscience in saying “Amen” to realities they do not accept. Thus, the Church reminds us that the sacraments are not intended to engender unity. Rather, they are intended to express the unity that already exists among believers. Catholics are, therefore, not to receive communion in Protestant ecclesial communities because Catholics are not in communion with Protestants. That is why Jesus’ words in our Gospel are so chilling: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.” [\(link\)](#)

G. A Catholic friend is saying that according to 1 Cor 7:14 a Christian can save a non-Christian if they are married. How would I answer this?

My A.

Let’s carefully examine what 1 Corinthians 7:14 says:

“For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”

*It says an unbelieving spouse is “sanctified” by the believing spouse and that their children are “holy.” The 2 terms are clearly related to each other in this verse, as they are in other parts of Scripture. **The question is:** Does this mean the spouse or the children are “saved” or “made right with God” by the faith of another person?*

If we look at other places where these terms are used:

- *1 Thessalonians 4:3 says “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality” In this passage, ‘sanctified’ is related to living a moral life, not to salvation.*
- *1 Peter 2:4-5 says “As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.” In this passage, Peter associates being chosen (or called) by God to being Holy.”*
- *Isaiah 6:3 says that angels “were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.” Most theologians define the word Holy to mean ‘Set Apart for a special purpose.’ God is called Holy three times because he is so ‘set apart’ from his creation. What ‘Holy’ clearly doesn’t mean in this passage is ‘saved’ because God doesn’t need saving.*
- *In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul says he is writing “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people” In this passage, ‘sanctified’ is related to those who have been called out by God to be Holy.*

Pulling all this together, we see that to be sanctified, or to be holy, means to be set apart for a special purpose. It does not mean that one is saved. In ancient Israel, infant males were circumcised, which set them apart. It meant that they were part of God’s chosen nation of Israel. But Scripture makes it clear that not all who were set apart in this way were true ‘sons of God.’

FINALLY, taking in other teachings of Scripture, it is clear that every man stands before God on his own, and he will be judged by what he does, not on what others do.

- *Psalm 49:7-8 teaches that “No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.”*
- *Ezekiel 18:20 says “The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.”*

- *Romans 14:10-12 says “For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.”*
 - *2 Corinthians 5:10 says “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*
 - *Revelation 20:12 says “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”*
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Q. When did the 7 Sacraments originate?

My A.

It was not until the Council of Trent in 1545-63 that the sacraments were cataloged as seven in number. These seven sacraments were: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, the Eucharist, Sacred Orders, Holy Matrimony, and Extreme Unction (Last Rites, or Anointing of the sick).

-Confirmation is a ritual that was bequeathed sacramental status in the twelfth century A.D. by Peter Lombard.

-Penance was codified as a sacrament by the Council of Trent.

-Eucharist. The notion that when the priest pronounces sacred words “this is my body [blood]” the bread and the fruit of the vine are transformed into the literal body and blood of the Savior. This concept became an article of faith at the Council of Trent.

-Last Rites was defined at the Council of Trent.

NOTE: Each of the sacraments has a physical component (oil, wine/bread, water, etc.). This is considered critical, but we believe Scripture teaches that the ‘It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh conveys no benefit [it is of no account].’ (John 6:63, AMP).

J. How long has Roman Catholicism believed in Purgatory?

My A.

I'd like to answer with a lengthy but frank and instructive quote from the book *Why I Am a Catholic*, by Garry Wills.

To cap it all, Urban offered a special indulgence for those going on crusade. This was a dangerous gift that would become a great curse to the church later on; but it, too, seemed a popular move at the time. In fact, the popular preachers gave Urban's words a scope he had not intended. The theology of indulgences had not yet been developed, and all that Urban had in mind was a remission of penitential acts imposed by the church in this life. But preachers of the crusade extended this to cover penalties to be performed in the afterlife (in purgatory). Once people acted on this understanding, it became impossible to back off from it, and theologians had to come up with a justification for this new papal power. What gave the pope authority to dispose of people's souls even in the afterlife? Peter Abelard said that no such justification could be found; and it was not until the next century that Hugh of Saint-Cher came up with a notion that became the official rationale — that the church has a "treasury of merit" earned by Christ and the saints, which can be drawn on to pay out to others." Even the New Catholic Encyclopedia admits: "The theory of indulgences lagged more than a century behind the practice. It was not until the teaching of Hugh of Saint-Cher (c. 1230) that the source of the grant was related to the Church's treasury of merits." The point here is that Urban had lit a populist fire, and the popes recognized the force of what was happening. By the time Bernard of Clairvaux preached the Second Crusade in 1146, "the indulgence, once a means to an end, had become an end in itself." Indulgences were taking their place in a whole system of populist teachings that pro- moted what has been called "the pastoral revolution".

The doctrine of purgatory was just being clarified in the second half of the twelfth century, and it, too, was a popular success: "Purgatory made even more impressive headway with the populace than it did with the theologians and clergy." To an age with vivid and omnipresent fears of hell, the idea that there was a less final destiny for sinners had to be appealing. Though Christians had prayed for the dead throughout the history of the church, and had come to use "purgatorial" as an adjective with a word like "pain" or "trial," there was no clear definition of its status or place. It was only in the 1170s that purgatory became a noun and theologians defined its nature.

The purgatory doctrine was a necessary adjunct to the theory of indulgences. Otherwise how could one set the exact times of release from purgatory? Another bit of teaching had to be added, and it was — a specification of what, exactly, was a venial sin. (Only venial sins could be punished in purgatory — mortal ones sent you to hell.) It is no wonder, then, that "the system in which mortal sins are contrasted to venial sins was fully worked out only in the second half of the twelfth century, by the disciples of the theologian Gilbert Porreta (Gilbert de la Porreta), who died in 1154." This theology was also needed by the authors of penitentiaries, the guidebooks for priests, who were given new authority for the practices of the confessional: "The discipline of the confessional was formally established in the western church by canon 21 of Fourth Lateran [1215], Omnis utriusque sexus, which has been called with pardonable exaggeration 'perhaps the most important legislative act in the history of the church'. This is when the formula "I absolve you of your sins" first came into use. Confession, purgatory, indulgences, crusades, and a theology of venial sin made a tightly interlocking construct whose parts seemed to confirm each other.

S. What does the Catholic Church make of verses like Romans 4:5 that clearly state salvation is not of works?

My A.

In many cases, troublesome verses are simply ignored. For example, the *Catechism* has little to say about Galatians or Hebrews. Other times, what might be called tortured logic is used to make the Scriptures say what they want it to say. As a prime example, consider this: While Romans 11:6 simple says that salvation is either by works or grace, otherwise grace is no longer grace, the *Catechism* addresses this issue by basically saying one must “merit grace.” See if you can make sense of its explanation in paragraphs 2017-2027:

- *The grace of the Holy Spirit confers upon us the righteousness of God. Uniting us by faith and Baptism to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Spirit makes us sharers in his life.*
- *Like conversion, justification has two aspects. Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, and so accepts forgiveness and righteousness from on high.*
- *Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man.*
- *Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God's mercy.*
- *Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.*
- *The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom.*
- *Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.*
- *Sanctifying grace makes us "pleasing to God." Charisms, special graces of the Holy Spirit, are oriented to sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. God also acts through many actual graces, to be distinguished from habitual grace which is permanent in us.*
- *We can have merit in God's sight only because of God's free plan to associate man with the work of his grace. Merit is to be ascribed in the first place to the grace of God, and secondly to man's collaboration. Man's merit is due to God.*
- *The grace of the Holy Spirit can confer true merit on us, by virtue of our adoptive filiation, and in accordance with God's gratuitous justice. Charity is the principal source of merit in us before God.*
- *No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.*

J. Can you give examples of things that have differing belief levels?

My A.

I will answer this with a quote from a Catholic website:

Confession of (Catholic) Faith

From: [www.meaningofcatholic.com/my-](http://www.meaningofcatholic.com/my-confession-of-faith/)

[confession-of-faith/](http://www.meaningofcatholic.com/my-confession-of-faith/)

The distinction between “essentials” and “doubtful matters,” however, is by degrees. The Church distinguishes these degrees by the Theological Notes of doctrine. The highest degree Note represents the highest degree of certainty and thus the greatest obligation for assent, while the lowest is the least certain and the least obligatory for belief:

1. ***De Fide*** – of the faith – explicit in Scripture, Tradition, may also be explicitly defined by highest Church authority
 1. Example: all who die in mortal sin will suffer hell for eternity
 2. Denial of any of these truths is the mortal sin of heresy.

2. ***De Fide Ecclesiastica*** – ecclesiastical faith – explicitly defined by Church authority, implicit in Scripture and Tradition.
 1. Example: the Assumption of Mary
 2. Denial of any of these truths is the mortal sin of heresy.
3. ***Sententia Fidei Proxima*** – proximate to the faith – teaching is generally understood by the Theologians as explicit in Scripture and Tradition but not explicitly defined by the Church
 1. Example: The Blessed Trinity can only be known through revelation
 2. Denial of any of these truths is the mortal sin of error proximate to heresy
4. ***Sententia Certa*** – theologically certain – implicit in Scripture and Tradition, not explicitly defined by the Church
 1. Example: the primary purpose of Matrimony is the generation of children. The secondary purpose is mutual help and regulation of lust.
 2. Denial of any of these truths is the mortal sin of error against the faith
5. ***Sententia Communis*** – common teaching – this teaching is implicit in Tradition and is generally accepted by the Theologians, but is technically a free opinion.
 1. Example: willful sins against the sixth commandment are always mortal sins
 2. It is licit to object to these teachings *if and only if there is grave cause*. To object to any without grave cause is the mortal sin of temerity
6. ***Sententia Probabilis*** – probable teaching – a teaching that is well founded on good authority yet is open to question. Pious beliefs and tolerated opinions also fall under this note and have the lowest degree of certainty.
 1. Example: Judas received Holy Communion at the last supper
 2. Denial of any of these teachings is licit provided piety is given to legitimate authority

Thus we may see that in actual fact, Notes 1-4 are essentials to the faith, while 5 is technically “doubtful” (in the sense mentioned above) but only with grave cause, whereas 6 is entirely doubtful matter, provided piety is observed. Thus no man can call himself Catholic and deny anything above *Communis*, and can only question *Communis* with grave cause. A *Sententia Probabilis* alone is completely open for discussion.

Q. You mentioned the spiritual doubt of Mother Teresa. How do you know this?

My A.

There was a book published about this from her letters. Many news sources reported on this when the book was published, included this article from the *Des Moines Register*, 8/25/07:

“Mother Teresa struggled with faith, letters reveal”

Mother Teresa, a globally beloved symbol of saintly devotion to the poor, spent her last 50 years secretly struggling with doubts about her faith, her newly published letters show.

“If there be God — please forgive me. When I try to raise my thoughts to Heaven, there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul,” she wrote. “How painful is this unknown pain — I have no Faith.”

The letters paint an astonishing alternate portrait of the nun revered for her selflessness and serenity. In reality, the letters indicate, she was tortured for decades by her inability to feel even the smallest glimmer of the Lord’s presence.

She felt abandoned by Christ, referred to Jesus as “the Absent One,” and called her own smile “a mask.”

In the 1960s, after receiving an important prize, she wrote, “This means nothing to me, because I don’t have Him.”

Sixty-six years’ worth of her deeply personal letters to superiors and confessors — preserved by the Catholic Church despite her dying wish that they be destroyed — are published in a new book, “Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light,” excerpted in Time magazine.

The book is by the Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk, director of the Mother Teresa Center and the driving force behind efforts to canonize her.

She has already been beatified, the step before formally being declared a saint.

“I’ve never read a saint’s life where the saint has such an intense spiritual darkness. No one knew she was that tormented,” Kolodiejchuk said. “It will give a whole new dimension to the way people understand her.”

He argues that the depth of her spiritual suffering increases her saintliness.

Most believers suffer from crises of faith, but the duration of Teresa’s alienation from Christ seems extreme.

It began, she wrote, soon after she set up her Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta in the late 1940s to succor India’s poor. And it lasted, with only a joyous five-week respite in 1959 when she re-found God, until her death at age 87, a decade ago.

“There is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work’” she wrote in 1953.

After Pope Pius XII died in October 1958, Teresa prayed to him for proof that God was pleased with her work. “Then and there,” she rejoiced, “disappeared the long darkness that strange suffering of 10 years.”

But five weeks later she reported being “in the tunnel again,” and her dark ‘night of the soul’ never lifted.

The nun, born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu to ethnic Albanian parents in what is, now Macedonia, coped with what she termed her “spiritual dryness” by likening it to Christ’s doubt on the cross.

“I have come to love the darkness for I believe now that it is part of a very, very small part of Jesus’ darkness & pain on earth,” she wrote in 1961.

Teresa, was a 36-year-old convent teacher “riding on a train in India on Sept. 10, 1946, when she said Christ spoke to her directly, telling her to become a missionary in the slums to help the poorest of the poor. “Come and be My light” is what she heard.

Back then, she felt a deeply personal bond with Jesus, recounting conversations and visions. It was that loss that she mourned the rest of her life, although she never abandoned her work.

Q. The way you have spoken about Mother Teresa, it sounds like you think she may not even be saved. Is this true?

My A.

First, I understand that the Catholic Church has declared her a saint, with confidence that she is now in heaven. She is just the kind of person who can make it through the process of canonization easily, because of her great amount of good works—the kind the church would all super-abundant good works, enough to secure her own salvation as well as many extra works that could help others as well. I hope you understand Scripture well enough that we cannot hold to that belief—that her works helped save anyone. We hold to *Solus Christos*.

Second, her life and philosophy modeled true Catholicism in several ways. A few examples of this: (1) When asked if she converted people, her response was “I hope I can help Catholics be better Catholics; Muslims be better Muslims; and Hindus be better Hindus.” This is in keeping with the teachings of Vatican II and recent popes who hold to universal salvation. I’m sure you can see it is

not in keeping with the Bible.

(2) That she harbored lifelong doubt despite being very devoted to the rosary and her church, seems to indicate to me that she lacked a vital, direct relationship with Jesus, the kind that we have, and which Pope Francis said could be dangerous. Of course, true Christians can have doubts and long-term struggles with their faith, but they do not stay in those forever.

(3) Some researchers who have dug into the *kind of care* that she really provided to those she ministered to, seem to be surprised that she didn't seem all that interested in actually providing *pain relief* to them. This seemed to be explained by the Catholic belief that the more one suffers on earth, the less they will suffer in the afterlife. This would not seem to be the belief of someone who holds to the sufficiency of Christ, or justification through faith alone, or being saved by grace alone.

(4) It's my belief that the sincerest 'Christians' are either 'devout' Catholics or 'devoted' Protestants, where 'devout' means committed to the regulations, and 'devoted' means in love with Christ.

Because both the devout and devoted can appear active and enthusiastic, we tend to think they must have the same motivation, the same heart. This is simply not true—we can be motivated to make sure we earn our place in heaven or we can be motivated by gratitude to give maximum glory to God—out of a changed heart.

If we are true to our Reformation heritage, as well as to Scripture alone, we simply must believe that no matter how hard one works, if they are not trusting in Christ alone, they are not saved. We look on the outside, so we may not be able to tell, but God judges the heart.

He knows, and his judgement will be according to truth, that is, according to his Word.

Q. I have a close friend (say, John) who is a true believer but is engaged to a lapsed Catholic. He has said that his fiancée will not insist on raising their children Catholic. How might I handle this?

My A.

Since it sounds like he is open to discussing this with you, you may have to ask some very probing questions. Perhaps a conversation like this: “As you probably can already sense, I am somewhat concerned about your engagement. Although I know your fiancée is a very nice person, the fact that she doesn’t view Christianity like you do, I think will likely lead to struggles in your marriage, and significant ones. Would you mind if I asked you a few personal questions that are weighing deeply on my heart?”

[with permission, get serious here] “John, I know you are a Christian, but people define that in different ways. Would you mind telling me what being a Christian means to you, how you became a Christian, and how it impacts your daily life?”

[assuming an answer such as “I’ve accepted Christ as my Savior, and I try to avoid sinning, but confess my sins when I do.”] “John, do you consider yourself a follower of Christ?”

[assuming a yes answer] “I’m glad to hear that because Jesus’ call to all his disciples was to follow me. So, what does that mean to you exactly?”

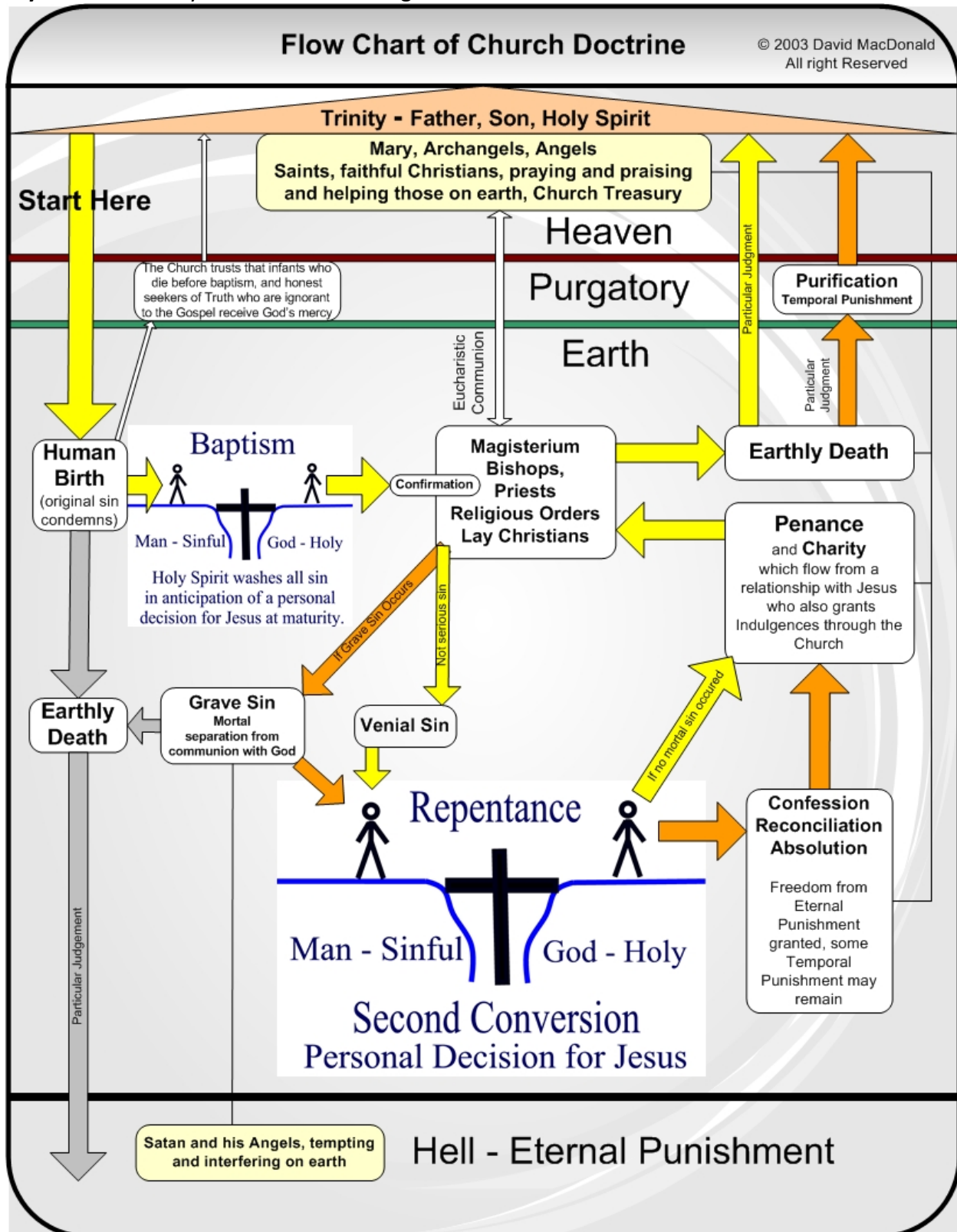
Would you be willing to listen to a half-hour message by a previous pastor of GBC? I think it clearly explains the stages of Christian growth and I’d like to see if you agree with it after you listen to it ([link](#)). It’s message 1 of a 4-part series ([here](#)).

...[I need to finish this answer]...

[This much conversation may not be able to be had in a single setting, but it gives you the idea of the kinds of things you can say when the Lord leads.]

Q. Would a Roman Catholic agree with the *Gospel According to Rome* diagram?

My A. Well actually I found a similar diagram on a Catholic website that looks to me similar:



Q. What are your issues with C.S. Lewis?

My A. I admit that I've enjoyed reading the Narnia series with my kids, and that some of his general thoughts about apologetics are very good. However, since he is an Anglican, he has a certain set of beliefs that bother me. An article that details my concerns is here:

Shocking Beliefs of C. S. Lewis

November 11, 2014 by Frank Viola

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/frankviola/shockingbeliefsfcslewis/>

C. S. Lewis is regarded by many to be a "saint of evangelicalism." According TIME magazine, Lewis was "one of the most influential spokesmen for Christianity in the English-speaking world."

The esteemed Reformed Anglican J.I. Packer called Lewis "our patron saint." Christianity Today wrote that he "has come to be the Aquinas, the Augustine, and the Aesop of contemporary Evangelicalism" as well as "the 20th century's greatest Christian apologist." Lewis was an avowed atheist who converted to Christianity and quickly became renowned as a "defender of the faith" and an "Evangelical icon."

Interestingly, he died the same day that John F. Kennedy did (November 22, 1963). Strikingly, both Lewis and Kennedy were called "Jack" by their friends.

Nonetheless, despite his amazing contribution to the Christian faith, here are shocking beliefs held by Lewis.

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE PROCEEDING: These beliefs aren't shocking to me necessarily, as I've read a good bit of C.S. Lewis as well as the Eastern Fathers, Anglican and Catholic scholars, and the like. But they will be shocking to many evangelicals, especially those who have claimed Lewis to be an icon of evangelicalism. They will not be shocking to most non-evangelicals.

1. Lewis believed in the concept of purgatory.

He discusses this in his book, Letters to Malcolm. In A Grief Observed, Lewis talked about his deceased wife, Joy, connecting her to purgatorial sufferings and cleansings.

Lewis believed that salvation is by grace, but to his mind, it produces total transformation and requires human reception.

Thus he felt that transformation can even occur after death, and some Christians need to be cleansed in order to be fit for heaven and enjoy it. For Lewis, purgatory is for total sanctification (rather than for retribution). From this viewpoint, Lewis saw purgatory as a work of grace. [MD: Also evident in Mere Christianity, book 4, chapter 9, "Counting the Cost"]

2. Lewis believed in praying for the dead.

Springing out of his belief in purgatorial cleansing was his belief (and practice) of praying for the dead. He discusses this in Letters to Malcolm.

3. Lewis believed that it was possible that those who in hell might journey toward grace after death.

For Lewis, salvation is not dependent on God's will, but the will of the damned. In *The Problem of Pain*, he wrote, "I believe that if a million chances were likely to do good, they would be given." He frequently stated that hell is locked from the inside and insisted that hell is self-chosen. Consequently, for Lewis, there is a possibility that one day some of the damned may choose to be restored. For this reason, some have speculated that Lewis was a universalist.

...[MD: I skipped point 4]...

5. Lewis believed the Catholic Mass was a valid portrayal of the Lord's Supper (Communion).

Lewis felt that the Roman Catholic view of the bread and wine is just as valid as the Protestant evangelical view. (The Catholic view regards the bread and wine to be the actual body and blood of Jesus while the evangelical view – generally speaking – regards the bread and wine to be symbolic.) He discusses this in *Letters to Malcolm*.

6. Lewis believed that the Book of Job wasn't historical, and the Bible contained errors.

Again, this will only be shocking to some evangelicals. You can find Lewis discussing this in his *Reflections on the Psalms*.

7. Lewis didn't seem to believe that all parts of the Bible were "the Word of God."

In his *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis made this interesting comment. [Christians] "still believe (as I do) that all Holy Scripture is in some sense—though not all parts of it in the same sense—the Word of God."

8. Lewis believed that the creation account in Genesis may have been derived from pagan sources.

In his *Reflections on the Psalms*, he wrote, "I have therefore no difficulty in accepting, say, the view of those scholars who tell us that the account of Creation in Genesis is derived from earlier Semitic stories which were Pagan and mythical."

9. Lewis believed that perfection in sexual holiness should be sought after, but it may not be attainable.

In *Mere Christianity*, he wrote, "We may indeed be sure that perfect chastity—like perfect charity—will not be attained by any merely human efforts. We must ask for God's help. Even when you have done so, it may seem to you for a long time that no help, or less help than you need, is being given. Never mind. After each failure, ask forgiveness, pick yourself up, and try again."
