

## CULTS AND FALSE RELIGIONS

# The Roman Catholic Church

### REVIEW:

- What are the 3 assumptions that form the JW world view? (Divine guidance comes only through the WT Society; JW's alone have the truth about God; every other church is false and controlled by Satan.)
- What is the goal of Mormons? (To attain godhood on the basis of good works)
- What did we learn about Allah, the god of the Koran? (he is really Allah, the pagan moon god)
- What is the key belief of Buddhism? (Reincarnation, or the circle of life)

### READING:

**1 Timothy 4:1-3** “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

### INTRODUCTION:

**Let me make a very plain statement that some of you may not agree with:**

## **The Roman Catholic Church is NOT a Christian church.**

In our first lesson on cults and false religions, we mentioned a few **key teachings** that identify a **Christian** church:

1. The inspiration of Scripture.
2. Biblical authority.
3. The virgin birth, sinless life and vicarious death of Christ.
4. The deity of Christ.
5. Salvation by grace through faith.
6. The nature of God.

**The Roman Catholic Church is wrong on two of these six key doctrines.** A group that teaches salvation by works, extra-biblical authority, confession to priests, prayers to saints, and worship of Mary is not a Christian church – **it is a false religion**. The Roman Catholic Church is sending more people to **Hell** with its false Gospel than any other group that calls itself Christian.

People who believe the teachings of the Catholic Church are not Christians, because a Christian is sinner saved by grace, not a saint saved by works! Any Catholic who is a true, born-again Christian is so because they have heard the true Gospel and been saved, not because of the teachings they heard in the Roman Catholic Church.

Just how large and influential is the Roman Catholic Church? The Roman Catholic Church, headquartered in Rome, Italy, has its own powerful City-State, the Vatican, and claims over 1 billion members worldwide and 60 million in the U.S. and Canada (as of 1996). It is by far the largest land owner in the world today, and has wealth by the billions of dollars. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, entire countries are controlled by the powerful Roman Catholic Church.

**Exactly what is the Roman Catholic Church?**

### **I. FOUNDER: The Roman Emperor Constantine.**

## II. HISTORY / ORGANISATION:

- 1) **Christianity started in its purest form in the early churches.** First-century Christianity was very simple, Scriptural, and powerful. There was very little formalism and traditionalism, and denominations were non-existent. Each church was led by one or more pastors, and there was no hierarchy.
- 2) **In 312 A.D., the Roman Emperor Constantine declared himself to be a Christian, and made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire.** Constantine, until his death, was engaged in the process of simultaneously building pagan temples and Christian churches, and was slowly turning over the reigns of his pagan priesthood to the Bishop of Rome.
- 3) **Constantine knew that he could not take away all the people's pagan traditions without a mass riot, so made a compromise.** He mixed Bible Christianity with paganism and idolatry and thus created a new hybrid religion.
- 4) **Constantine's mix of paganism & Christianity evolved into the Roman Catholic religion.**
- 5) **What kinds of pagan traditions were added to Christianity to form the Catholic religion?**
  - i) Salvation by works.
  - ii) The veneration of dead saints.
  - iii) The worship of idols.
  - iv) The worship of a mother goddess and her child.
  - v) The use of Pagan symbols.
  - vi) The elevation of a man to the position of mediator.
  - vii) The mass.
  - viii) The Eucharist.
  - ix) Prayers for the dead.
  - x) The Rosary.
  - xi) The pope's title and office of Pontifex Maximus.
  - xii) Relic worship.
  - xiii) Worship of the sacred heart.

Sincere people in the catholic religion are taught that such practices are Biblical and spiritual, but they have been **deceived!** The origins of all these practices are as **pagan** as could be.
- 6) **Later, in about 900 AD, the catholic churches split into the Roman Catholic Church and the eastern orthodox churches (Greek Orthodox, etc.).**
- 7) **The Protestant reformation was essentially begun in 1520 by Martin Luther and his followers.** They protested against the Catholic Church's false teachings and their sale of indulgences and religious relics. Over the decades, those who left the Catholic church (for both religious and political reasons) started various Protestant denominations: the Lutheran Church; the Church of England; the Presbyterian Church; the Methodist Church; etc.
- 8) **Baptists are not Protestants – we did not come out the Catholic Church.**

## III. PURPOSE: To bring all people into the fold of Christ's true Church – the Roman Catholic Church.

## IV. SOURCE OF AUTHORITY:

- 1) The Roman Catholic Bible, as interpreted by the Church.
- 2) The traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 3) The edicts of the Pope, head of the Church.

## V. CLAIM: To be the one true Christian Church under the headship of the Pope.

## VI. KEY LITERATURE:

- 1) The Roman Catholic Bible – mention the apocrypha.

- 2) The writings of the Church Fathers.

## **VII. ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY:**

- 1) Bible-believing Christianity is **rejected**.
- 2) Bible-believing Christians are **persecuted**.

i) **The Spanish Inquisition:** Those who left the Roman Catholic Church were called heretics, and were bitterly opposed and tortured by the Roman Catholic church.

- (a) Pope Innocent IV in 1252 approved torture and ordered civil authorities to burn "heretics". This torture was reinforced by Popes Alexander IV, Clement IV, Nicholas IV, Boniface VIII and others from 1254 - 1303.
- (b) **Roman Catholic documents revealed that they murdered around 68 million protesters from 1100 to 1800 AD when the Inquisition stopped.**
- (c) The following torture devices were used against protesters: the rack; thumbscrews; hanging; molten lead poured into the ears and mouth; eyes gouged out; etc.
- (d) 100,000 Albigenses were massacred in one day in 1211, then burned in heaps.
- (e) 10,000 Huguenots (French Protestants) were killed in Paris on St Bartholomews Day and 75,000 the week after. The Huguenot wars killed 200,000 Protestants.
- (f) The "30 Years War" in Germany saw the population drop dramatically due to Catholic armies invading and killing 900,000 protestants.
- (g) Truly, the Roman church is "drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Revelation 17:6.

ii) Even today, many Catholics are persecuted by family and friends for leaving the Church.

- 3) Bible-believing Christians are **pitied** because we are not part of the "true" church!

## **VIII. DOCTRINAL SUMMARY:**

- 1) **JESUS:** Co-Redeemer with the Virgin Mary.
- 2) **SALVATION:**

i) Catholics are taught from a young age that to get to heaven one must keep the sacraments, partake of the mass, do good works, and be a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

ii) "...justification itself...consists not in the mere remission of sins, but in the sanctification and renewal of the inner man by the voluntary reception of God's grace and gifts, whence a man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of a foe and so an heir according to hope of eternal life. This change happens either by reason of a perfect act of charity elicited by a well disposed sinner or by virtue of **the Sacrament either of Baptism or of Penance** (confession)." (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

iii) The Roman Catholic Church is "the necessary means of salvation." (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

iv) They never know if they've done enough good works to make it into heaven. They never know for sure if they are going to heaven. **The pope doesn't even know for sure!**

v) To teach the all-sufficiency of the saving work of Christ would undermine the entire structure of Catholicism. People are told that if they leave the Roman Catholic Church, they'll surely go to hell. People are kept in bondage of fear of missing salvation if they leave the Roman Catholic Church.

vi) **The Catholic "Gospel" leaves Christ out.** It teaches people that if they are faithful to do such things as attending mass, partaking of sacraments, praying to Mary, confessing sins to a priest, doing good works etc, they may eventually make it to Heaven.

vii) **The Roman Catholic Church is not a Christian Church because it does not preach the Christian Gospel of salvation by grace through faith.**

viii) "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (**Galatians 2:16**)

ix) Eg. The Greek Orthodox man who I met door knocking at Maroubra. When asked why he was sure of Heaven, he replied, "Because I am worthy." **Blasphemy!**

### 3) **HELL:**

i) Catholic theologians distinguish four meanings of the term hell:

- (a) Hell in the strict sense, or the place of punishment for the damned;
- (b) The limbo of infants where those who die in original sin alone, and without personal mortal sin, are confined and undergo some kind of punishment;
- (c) The limbo of the Fathers in which the souls of the just who died before Christ awaited their admission to heaven; for in the meantime heaven was closed against them in punishment for the sin of Adam;
- (d) Purgatory, where the just, who die in venial sin or who still owe a debt of temporal punishment for sin, are cleansed by suffering before their admission to heaven.  
(Catholic Encyclopaedia)

ii) Purgatory is an imaginary half-way place between heaven and hell, where unforgiven sin is purged away. For the Roman Catholic, purgatory teaching is:

- (a) A terrifying prospect of entering a place of unspeakable torture. Millions of Catholics live and die in great fear of death, to spend an unknown number of years in purgatory.
- (b) A great money raiser. Suffering in purgatory may be shortened by gifts of money, masses, prayers by the priests, etc.

### 4) **THE BIBLE:**

i) The Roman Catholic Church claims that it gave us the Bible, and that it determined which books should comprise the New Testament and Old Testament: "The church existed before a word of the New Testament scriptures was written. After they were written, the church determined the Canon. Therefore **the church is the authoritative voice that must be obeyed**, for without the church, we would not have the Bible."

ii) Though the church existed before the New Testament was written, this does not give the church authority over or equal to the Scriptures. The church must always be subject to the authority of God's written Word.

iii) The Roman Catholic Church has a history of burning Bibles, of stopping Bibles being printed, and of forbidding its members from reading it on their own. During the Dark Ages, it was easy to control the masses because people did not have a Bible in their own language.

iv) When it could not stop Bibles being printed, it denied anti-catholic scriptures by saying "that's your interpretation", meaning that the Bible has no authority if anyone can interpret it in any manner.

v) They allow Catholics to read the Bible, but teach that it is wrong and sinful to put any interpretation on scriptures that is contrary to Roman Catholic doctrine. In other words, don't think for yourself, you may discover that Catholic doctrine is full of error and contradictions. Just blindly accept everything Rome tells you. **Trust Rome!**

### 5) **MARY:**

i) **We may notice several things about the Roman Catholic Church's unscriptural view of Mary:**

- (a) **Historical connection with Pagan mother and child worship.** Mother and child worship started at the Tower of Babel, and it has been a common practice among many ancient societies. Eg. Semiramis and Tammuz (Babylon); Aphrodite and Bacchus (Greece); Venus and Jupiter (Rome). The Catholic Church simply changed their pagan mother and child worship to worship Mary and Jesus.
- (b) **Mary is claimed to be a mediator and intercessor for mankind.** Jesus is falsely portrayed as being angry with people; Mary is falsely portrayed as being merciful, and as Jesus' mother, is seen as uniquely able to pacify Jesus Christ's supposed anger towards people.
- (c) **The Immaculate Conception:** Mary was born sinless and led a sinless life. In the Constitution Ineffabilis Deus of 8 December, 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined

that the Blessed Virgin Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.”

- (d) **Perpetual Virginity:** Mary remained a virgin all her life, never having sex with her husband Joseph and therefore having no other children.
- (e) **The Assumption of Mary:** Mary ascended into heaven in a bodily form. This was made official and "infallible" by Pope Pius XII in 1951.

**ii) This wrong view of Mary is very dangerous because it draws attention away from Christ and becomes, in fact, polytheism. Many Catholics rest upon Mary, as well as Christ and their good works, for salvation and eternal life.**

6) **WORSHIP:** Even though individual Catholics may attempt to deny it, The Roman Catholic Church teaches the worship of **many** gods:

- i) The God of the Bible.
- ii) Mary, Mother of God (so-called).
- iii) Departed Saints.

7) **THE CHURCH:**

i) According to the Catholic Encyclopaedia, the church is “THE NECESSARY MEANS OF SALVATION”:

- (a) “... how clearly it is laid down that only by entering the Church can we participate in the redemption wrought for us by Christ. Incorporation with the Church can alone unite us to the family of the second Adam, and alone can engraft us into the true Vine.”
- (b) “The Church alone dispenses the sacraments. It alone makes known the light of revealed truth. Outside the Church these gifts cannot be obtained. From all this there is but one conclusion: **Union with the Church** is not merely one out of various means by which **salvation** may be obtained: **it is the only means.**”
- (c) “This doctrine of the absolute necessity of union with the Church was taught in explicit terms by Christ. Baptism, the act of incorporation among her members, He affirmed to be **essential to salvation.**”

ii) The Catholic Encyclopaedia also teaches that “**As the Divinely appointed teacher of revealed truth, the Church is infallible.** This gift of inerrancy is guaranteed to it by the words of Christ, in which He promised that His Spirit would abide with it forever to guide it unto all truth. It is implied also in other passages of Scripture, and asserted by the unanimous testimony of the Fathers.”

## **IX. ERRORS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH:**

1) **Human tradition is elevated above the Word of God.** This is the key problem.

- i) Roman Catholicism quotes Church traditions as the authority as to why they add unbiblical doctrines.
- ii) “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy or vain deceit, after the tradition of man....and not after Christ.” (**Colossians 2:8**).
- iii) “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (**Matthew 15:3**).
- iv) “In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” **Matthew 15:9**.
- v) **The Bible IS our authority:** “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” (**2 Timothy 3:16**)
- vi) If the Catholic Church is infallible, why do so many of its teachings **contradict** the Bible?

2) **Confession of sins to a priest to obtain absolution.**

- i) Catholic Canon law 870 and 888 state that a priest has power to forgive sins, and confession to a priest at least once a year is necessary unto salvation.

ii) “For those who after baptism have fallen into sin, the Sacrament of Penance [confession] is as necessary unto salvation as is baptism itself for those who have not yet been regenerated.” (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

iii) “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (**Mark 2:7**)

iv) Catholic “auricular confession” is so evil because:

- (a) It gives great power to the priesthood (who are themselves nothing but sinners) to suppose that they can absolve sins.
- (b) It pollutes the mind by keeping impure thoughts in the mind long enough to make confession and to state them in words.

v) Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man, not a priest, not Mary, and not the saints: “There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” (**1 Timothy 2:5**)

### 3) **Penance.**

i) Catholicism believes that a priest has the power to forgive or retain sins and impose penance as a means of testing the genuineness of the person's confession, and of making a satisfaction to God for that sin.

ii) Penance is performing outward acts such as repeating prayers, like the "Hail Mary" or the "Rosary", as a payment for sin and to satisfy God.

iii) **Matthew 6:7** “But when ye pray, **use not vain repetitions**, as the **heathen** do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

### 4) **The Catholic Priesthood.**

i) A Roman Catholic priest is one who acts in the place of Christ, supposedly making unbelievers into Christians by "baptising" them.

ii) He converts the bread into Christ's flesh in the mass, and he forgives sins in the confessional.

iii) In the New Testament, all ministers are called elders, bishops or pastors, all referring to the one office, but there is no office of "priest".

iv) Christ is our Great High Priest, the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), so there is no need for other priests to mediate for us.

v) All believers are priests and have direct access to God through Christ: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...” (**1 Peter 2:9**)

### 5) **Infant Baptism.**

i) The Catholic infant "baptism" is not Bible baptism because:

- (a) Baptism in the New Testament Greek means “immerse, dip, plunge” (*baptizo*).
- (b) No baby was ever sprinkled in the Bible.
- (c) Baptism means nothing unless a person has received Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Faith is the prerequisite for baptism. Acts 8:36, 37.
- (d) Baptism does not save a person, as the Catholic Church claims. Only Christ's blood can cleanse us from sin.

ii) Protestant churches continue this unscriptural practice today because they learned it from their mother, not because they learned it from Scripture.

iii) It is not necessary to sprinkle infants so that they will go to Heaven if they die, because all babies got to Heaven. **2 Samuel 12:23**.

### 6) **Transubstantiation.**

i) This is the false idea that the whole substance of the bread and wine is converted into the actual and real entire body and blood of Christ.

ii) It was invented in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and is considered essential to salvation.

iii) Luke 22:19 states clearly that the Lord's Supper is for remembrance purposes: "This do in remembrance of me."

7) **Adoration of the Host (wafer).** Catholic doctrine requires Catholics to bow down to and worship the wafer bread as God. **This is idolatry!**

8) **The Mass.**

i) **At every mass, Christ is sacrificed again.** Catholic doctrine says: "In the mass, no less than on Calvary, Jesus really offers His life to His heavenly Father."

ii) The mass says that Christ's death on the cross is not good enough to fully pay for all our sins or to save us. The mass says that we get to God apart from Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross.

iii) **Question:** Must Christ be continually sacrificed in the mass, or was His blood sacrifice on the cross 100% sufficient to pay for all our sins for ever? In John 19:30 Jesus said, "IT IS FINISHED", which in the Greek is "*Tetelestai*" meaning "to make an end, to accomplish, to complete something, not merely to end it, but to bring it to perfection or its intended goal." It means that the whole work of salvation, the purpose for which Christ came into the world, has been accomplished on the cross. Nothing more can be added to it – including the sacrifice of the mass!

iv) **Christ's sacrifice is clearly stated as ONCE FOR ALL, not to be repeated.** Hebrews 10:10-14.

9) **Adoration of, and prayers to, Saints.**

i) "The true origin of canonization and beatification must be sought in the Catholic doctrine of the worship (cultus), invocation, and intercession of the saints. As was taught by St. Augustine, Catholics, while giving to God alone adoration strictly so-called, honour the saints because of the Divine supernatural gifts which have earned them eternal life, and through which they reign with God in the heavenly fatherland as His chosen friends and faithful servants." (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

ii) "It is objected that the invocation of saints is opposed to the unique mediatorship of Christ Jesus. There is indeed "one mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus". But He is our mediator in His quality of our common Redeemer; **He is not our sole intercessor nor advocate, nor our sole mediator** by way of supplication." (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

iii) Praying to saints is a Catholic device to stop people from praying to God and turns people away from developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

iv) The Bible states that all true believers are "saints".

v) Prayers to saints are contrary to the Bible which says, "After this manner pray ye: 'Our Father...'" (Matthew 6:9).

vi) Contacting the dead is forbidden in Deuteronomy 18:10, 11.

vii) There is no Bible example of praying to saints, nor is there any Bible example of them having power to answer prayer.

10) **Idolatry.**

i) This is the making of images that are worshipped and venerated.

ii) The Second Commandment: "Thou shalt not MAKE unto thee ANY graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not BOW DOWN thyself to them, Nor SERVE them." (**Exodus 20:4, 5**)

iii) The Catholic Council of Trent declares that: "It is lawful to have images in the church and to give honour and worship to them. ... **Images are put in churches that they may be worshipped.**"

iv) The Oxford dictionary defines an idol as: "An image used as an object of worship. A person or thing that is the object of excessive devotion." An Idolater is a devoted admirer of idols.

v) The Roman Catholic even removes the Second Commandment from their list of the Ten Commandments!

11) **Peter is the Rock upon which the Church of Christ is built.**

i) The whole structure of the Roman church is built on the assumption that in Matthew 16:13-19, Christ appointed Peter to be the first pope and so established the papacy.

ii) "The title pope...is at present employed solely to denote the Bishop of Rome, who, in virtue of his position as successor of St. Peter, is the chief pastor of the whole Church, the Vicar of Christ upon earth. The position of St. Peter after the Ascension, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles, realizes to the full the great commission bestowed upon him. He is...the undisputed head of the Church."  
(Catholic Encyclopaedia)

iii) "...**Christ is the head of the church:** and he is the saviour of the body...the church is subject unto Christ..." (Ephesians 5:23, 24)

iv) "For other **foundation** can no man lay than that is laid, which is **Jesus Christ.**" (1 Cor. 3:11)

v) The Catholic Church endues the Pope, Head of the Church, with great powers. For example,

- (a) It is his to prohibit the reading of such books as are injurious to faith or morals.
- (b) His is the condemnation of given propositions as being either heretical or deserving of some minor degree of censure.
- (c) He has the right to interpret authentically the natural law. Thus, it is his to say what is lawful or unlawful in regard to social and family life.
- (d) The solemn canonization of a saint is proper to the pope. Indeed it is commonly held that this is an exercise of the **papal infallibility.**
- (e) He can legislate for the whole Church.
- (f) As the supreme governor of the Church the pope has authority over all appointments to its public offices.
- (g) The pope has further the right to impose taxes on the clergy and the faithful for ecclesiastical purposes. (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

vi) "If anyone shall say that Blessed Peter the Apostle was not constituted by Christ our Lord as chief of all the apostles and the visible head of the whole Church militant: or that he did not receive directly and immediately from the same Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of true and proper jurisdiction, but one of honour only: let him be **anathema.**" (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

## 12) Sacraments:

i) The Council of Trent declared: "If anyone say that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not confer grace on those who place no obstacle to the same, let him be anathema...If anyone say that grace is not conferred by the sacraments...but that **faith in God's promises is alone sufficient for obtaining grace,** let him be **anathema**"

ii) Catholics have seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist (mass), penance/reconciliation (indulgences), extreme unction (last rights), marriage, and orders (ordination).

iii) The idea behind the sacraments is that the shedding of Christ's Blood in His death upon the cross is of no value unless it is somehow dispensed and applied "sacramentally" by the Catholic priesthood.

iv) Although Catholics believe that the first five sacraments are indispensable for salvation (because without any one of them, a mortal sin has been committed), baptism is considered the most important. Catholics believe that a person enters into the spiritual life of the Church through baptism. They practice infant baptism because they believe baptism erases original sin.

13) **Fifteen Apocryphal Books added to the Old Testament Bible in 1546 AD.** Roman Catholicism added these books in order to undermine Protestant belief in the Bible as sole authority. Some apocryphal books seemed to support Catholic dogma.

## X. TALKING WITH MEMBERS:

- 1) Focus on proving that they are great sinners, condemned and guilty before God. Rom 3:10, 19-24; Isaiah 64:6; Eccl. 7:20.
- 2) Refute salvation by works, the mass, sacraments, christening, etc. Eph 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; Gal 2:21.
- 3) Jesus is the only way - not the pope, priest, Mary, etc. John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5.
- 4) Receiving Jesus is not the mass. John 1:12; Romans 10:13.
- 5) You must be born again! John 3.

## **CONCLUSION:**

**Let us do everything in our power to love Catholics and give them the Gospel so that they can be delivered from false religion and become a child of God!**

For those who are saved and remain in the Catholic religion: God says: "COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Revelation 18:4.

There are seven possible reasons why some Christians choose to remain in the Roman Catholic Church:

1. Lack of knowledge of the Word of God.
2. Fear of rejection by family and friends.
3. Fear of going against ancestors.
4. Fear of becoming a social outcast.
5. Habit.
6. Fear of going to Hell.
7. Fear of change and the unknown.

## **HANDOUT**

## **REVIEW / QUESTIONS:**