

WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

Teachings of the R C Church Biblestudy by pastor Ing.M.v.d.Kraats part 1
2011

Lesson 1

Subject of this letter.

Not only must nothing be added to God's plan of salvation but nothing must be taken away either. We believe however, that this has happened in the RC Church. We could let this drop as a simple observation if it wasn't for the fact that in the last years the contact between protestants and roman catholics has greatly increased. It is, of course, well known that the Protestant Church is part of the World Council of Churches. Our observation now is that the same thing is happening with the evangelical protestants. Often it's the charismatics who have a leading role in this. In another part of this letter you'll find a few examples of this from the States and also from the Netherlands.

Perhaps some of you won't be so happy with this subject. It's possible that you have RK family members, friends, colleagues or neighbours. We do understand this. Quite a few of us are in the same situation. We want to emphasise, however, that we are not writing against people but against the theology, the doctrine. When we now talk about the RC Church then, we are referring to what this church teaches and how they put this into practise in their liturgy. We will compare all this in the light of the bible.

The Roman Catholic doctrine.

Pope John Paul 11 signed on the 11th October 1992 the new catechism. The Dutch translation of this book of 733 pages came into circulation in 1995. The Pope calls the catechism a faithful and authentic reference text for the teaching of catholic doctrine [Page 11]. One does find bible references, but also references to all the councils from of the beginning of the RK church and to synods, papal documents, church rights, liturgy, church authors from Ambrosius to Thomas van Aquino.

In this letter we will mainly concentrate on the catechism. One of our supporting members is an ex-Roman Catholic from Belgium, who was converted at the age of 25 and who then left the RC Church. He gave us many practical tips and was so, a great help to us.

The Roman Catholic Church.

This is the largest church in the world with 900 million registered members. The church is centrally governed from the Vatican City - 0,44 km² with 1000 inhabitants, situated in Rome. The Pope is the head and has several titles, such as: - Substitute for Jesus Christ, Successor to Peter and High Priest [Pontifex Maximus].

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The Pope is not head of the church but Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is the One on earth who in the name of Jesus lives and works in His Church. The bible doesn't recognise anyone anymore as the High Priest but speaks about the holy priesthood of all believers [1Pet.2:5]. Christians only need to bow for God and not for the Pope.

"Outside the RC Church no salvation".

The attitude towards protestants has mellowed since the second Vatican Council of 1962-1965.

"Those who have been baptized and call themselves by the honourable name, "christian", but don't confess the complete faith or don't have fellowship under the successor of Peter, are still recognized by the church to a certain degree. Those who believe in Christ and have been baptized in the right way are, though it be imperfect, in fellowship with the Catholic Church".[par. 838]

Salvation is however withheld, for par 846 says:

The council teaches, supported by the Holy Scriptures and Tradition, that this pilgriming church is necessary for salvation. Christ is the only Mediator and the way of salvation, and in His body, the church, He is present with us. Through His making clear to us the necessity of faith and baptism He has also made clear to us the necessity of the church itself, where men enters through the door of baptism. That's why the people who refuse to become members of the Catholic Church can't be saved for they know only too well that Christ has established the church as necessary. "

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We don't agree with this. Protestants don't need to be members of the RC Church in order to be saved. According to the bible, salvation is for everyone. Is.55:1a says: " Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!"

Relationship between Tradition and the Scriptures.

...two different ways of passing it on.

"Scripture is God's word, in so far as this has been inspired by the Holy Ghost and has been recorded on paper." Holy Tradition keeps the word of God, that has been entrusted by Christ, the Lord, and by the Holy Ghost to the apostles, who passed it on to their successors, so that they enlightened by the Spirit of truth, can keep it, explain it and spread it through their preaching." (par. 81)

"It follows therefore, that the church who has been entrusted with communicating and interpreting revelations, doesn't only draw from the Scriptures her assurance concerning revelations. Therefore, one should accept

and honour the both with the same amount of love, reverence and respect". [par. 82]

The RC Church includes the Apocrypha in their bible and uses these books in her teaching.

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We can't agree with them on this point. Protestants only recognize the Scriptures as authoritative. The apocryphal books: Tobias, Judith, Wisdom Ecclesiastes, Baruch, Makkabees 1 and 2 and several chapters of Esther and Daniel are not acceptable to protestants.

Roman Catholic baptism.

"Baptism is the birth to new life in Christ. According to the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation just as the church is. Baptism is the gateway." [par. 1277]

"The fruit of baptism is a rich reality consisting of: forgiveness from original sin and all personal sin; new life, being born again and so becoming a child of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Ghost. Through the act the baptized is incorporated into the church, the body of Christ, and becomes part of Christ's priesthood." [par. 1279]

Comment workgroup.

According to the bible baptism is not some mystical act of the priest by which someone is born again and becomes a child of God. 1 Pet. 3:21 says: " and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 was able to be baptized because he believed in Jesus Christ and His work of salvation with all his heart. Baptism is not a sacrament whereby something essentially changes. It is an outward testimony to something which has inwardly already taken place through faith. Our sins are not washed away through baptism.

The sacrament of the Eucharist.

"During the last supper, in the night He was betrayed, our Saviour established the Eucharist sacrifice of His body and blood as a lasting memory of His death until He comes again and so in this way He has given to His beloved bride, the church, a memorial celebration of His death and resurrection: sacrament of goodness, sign of unity, band of love, Easter meal, where Christ is consumed, the heart is filled with grace and the guarantee of a glorious future is given". [par. 1323]

"Only priests who have been officially consecrated are allowed to preside over the Eucharist and bless the bread and the wine, in order that it can become the body and blood of the Lord." [par. 1411]

"The transformation of the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ comes about through being consecrated. Under the sacred form of bread and wine is the living and glorious Christ present in a true and real way, His body and His blood, with His soul and His divinity." [par. 1413]

"The Eucharist as sacrifice is also celebrated for the rehabilitation of the living and the dead from their sins, and to receive from God spiritual or temporal

blessings."[par. 1414]

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It is clear that, when we compare the way the protestants keep communion with the Roman Catholic Eucharist that the differences form an unbridgeable gap. We have to continue to reject the Eucharist celebration, just as it was rejected during the Reformation. Here are a few reasons why we do this:

- Christ is sacrificed on the altar [=sacred table] in the church, every time the Eucharist is celebrated.
- For this to take place the bread and wine must be changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The change takes place during the prayer of the priest [consecration prayer] and is called transformation.
- The priests and the Roman Catholic believers literally sacrifice and consume the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
- One includes the sins of the dead in the Eucharist celebration. The Roman Catholic church have in fact introduced again sacrifices with altars and priests. In comparison with the sacrifices in the Old Testament the biggest difference is that the priests don't offer animals, but the Lamb of God is offered and consumed. We don't see how this can comply with the protestant conviction. They celebrate communion as a remembrance of what Jesus Christ has done for them at Calvary. That was the last and real altar. The last words of Jesus Christ on that altar were: "It is finished". The continuing occurrences in the RC church of sacrifices and thousands of altars are a rejection of the last words of Jesus Christ.

NB. We have had to use the word "protestant" in this letter, in a restricted way. We are speaking about those protestants who believe in a universal Christian church, who confess that the Son of God has come as man to earth and that through His suffering and death at Calvary, God fulfilled His plan of salvation. We are aware that there are different views amongst protestants about how one should celebrate communion. In our opinion those are not relevant to the matter in this letter.

Questions Lesson 1

- Call several titles of the Pope
- What is the sacrament of the Eucharist in reality?

Lesson 2

Roman Catholic writers about the Eucharist.

- "The hidden Manna" is a book written by professor James T. O'Conner from New York about the theology of the Eucharist. He compares the bread and the wine, which are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ to the manna from heaven, which the Israelites received every morning.

Father A.M. Roguet from Paris, writes in his book, "Invited to the Lord's supper" the following:

"The reality of the sacrifice is completed with the doxology at the end of the Eucharist prayer. The sacrificed Christ has been offered to the Father and we with Him. The only thing that rests for us to do is to take communion to show our

participation in the sacrifice".

Padre Pio of Pietrelcia writes on the back of the Eucharist promotion video film, "The gift from the Father", published by the Ignatius Press in San Francisco, the following:

"It would be easier for the world to exist without the sun, than to have to live without the holy mass".

Comment workgroup

SEE APPENDIX

In spite of these positive and reassuring words about the Eucharist the Roman Catholic participant doesn't have any certainty in his heart. They have to earn their salvation on earth through good works and obedience to the Roman Catholic Church.

NB. For those of you who wonder how a Roman Catholic experiences the Eucharist, we have included an appendix at the end of this letter with a number of quotations from the book "The faith of the Catholic". This book is written by N.G.M. van Doornik M.S.G. for edification of the catholic believer and for those who are seeking and are interested in the catholic faith. [foreword of the book page 7].

Contact between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

- On the 11 of October 1972 Kathryn Kuhlman had a private audience with pope Paul VI. Afterwards she said: "When I met pope Paul there was unity. He had an interpreter with him but we didn't need him". The pope gave her his papal blessing for all her work. We mentioned her name and work in our letter of 11-9-1995. She was one of the first charismatic faith healers where people fell backwards.

-Benny Hinn experienced during a Eucharist celebration in the Roman Catholic church in Amerillo, the tangible appearance of a person dressed in a silk garment, standing before him. God revealed to Hinn that evening, that participating in communion means eating Jesus Christ and not just bread . We need to mention here that Benny Hinn was brought up as a Greek Orthodox, but confesses now to be a born again charismatic evangelical Christian.

- The Promise Keepers, from the United State, gathered together on the 4th October 1997, in Washington D.C. for a day conference with the name. "Stand in the gap". A million people attended it. This large evangelical movement appointed on the 16th June 1997 Michael Timmins in their board. He is a lawyer and a business man and also for many years the leader of the Roman Catholic charismatic renewal movement. This took place after their declaration of faith was modified in order to make it acceptable to the Roman Catholic believers . Bill McCartney, the founder of Promise Keepers and Randy Philips, the chairman of the main committee are both members of the Boulder Valley Vineyard church, which is a part of the charismatic Vineyard churches of the late John Wimber .

-Evangelicals and Catholics together E.C.T. is a group of prominent evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders in the States who want to work together. We have already mentioned this group in our letter of 25-11-1996. In their declaration, "The gift of salvation", from 4th of October 1997, a joint statement is made concerning salvation through the gospel. They make it very clear that this is a

personal initiative and not one on behalf of their different fellowships. The magazine "Christianity Today" has published their full statement and the list of 33 signatures.

Three well-known names catch our attention: Mr. Bill Bright from Campus Crusade for Christ [Agape in the Netherlands], Mr. J.I. Packer, writer of several good books and the Roman Catholic writer Mr. Peter Kreeft. His book "Ecumenical Jihad", was published in 1996. He advocates herein, a joint effort in fighting the evil and humanism in the world by all God-fearing Christians, God-fearing Jews and God-fearing Muslims.

- The Brotherhood of Pentecostal Churches report frequently in their paper, "Parakleet" about the contacts between the worldwide Pentecostal Church and Rome. We touched on this in our letter of 25-11-1996 with the following remark: "Did you know that the Brotherhood of Pentecostal Churches is seeking closer relationships with the Roman Catholic Church?" There have been quite a lot of reactions denying this remark. We realize that this is not so in the Netherlands and want to correct this but it is true that the worldwide Brotherhood of Pentecostal Churches has since 1972 been conversing with the church of Rome. David du Plessis from South Africa gave this advice in that same year. The Brotherhood sends frequently a representative to the discussion groups. In 1997 there were seven representatives from the worldwide Pentecostal Movement and ten Roman Catholic representatives present in Rome for talks. The Parakleet writes positively about these dialogues. They even reported that cardinal Cassidy, head of the papal council for the furthering of Christian unity, had honoured the meeting with his presence on the 25th anniversary of the dialogue .

-The Council of Churches in the Netherlands has organized for the 25th of April, a church day in Kampen, with the theme: "Aiming for reconciliation". In this council the cooperation between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics is already a fait accompli. One's attention is now fixed on ecumenism with other religions which the World Council of Churches has already been doing for a long time. One will be able to listen in Kampen to discussions with Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. The opportunity to look round the local Turkish mosque will be given. The Evangelical Alliance, which represents nearly all the evangelical churches, fellowships and organizations will also be present for the first time. Even though this is only in the capacity of spectator the coordinator, Mijnke Bosman, sees this as a help for ecumisme .

-Cardinal Simonis, archbishop of Utrecht, is hoping that a large number of Catholics will be present on the church day in the "Protestant stronghold" Kampen. The cardinal writes: "It promises to be an interesting and colourful" ecumenical happening but it mustn't become a cosy Christian party .

Conclusion and subject of next letter.

Protestants who have the desire for a closer relationship with the RK Church need to realize that they are embracing a largely unbiblical doctrine. The celebration of the Eucharist is detrimental in our eyes, to the biblical message and greatness of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary. The same

thing happens by placing Mary in the position as mediator. The RC Church continue to proclaim this. We will pay more attention to this in our next letter.

Questions Lesson 2

- Are there any arguments for bornagain Christians to join the R C Church?
- Should we as Christians work together with all big Faithes?

List of books read.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, Dutch version 1995.
- "The faith if the Catholic", N.G.M. van Doornik M.S.G., Publisher Het Spectrum =The Spectrum, Utrecht 1953.
- "The Motherhood of the Church", father Henri de Lubac, Paris ISBN 0-89870-014-0.
- "The Hidden Manna", prof. James O'Conner, New York ISBN 0-89870-288-7.
- "Invited to the Lord's supper", A.M. Roguet, Paris ISBN 90 317 0266 8.
- "Attitude, actions and gestures in the celebration of the eucharist", National council for liturgy, ISBN 907045274X

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