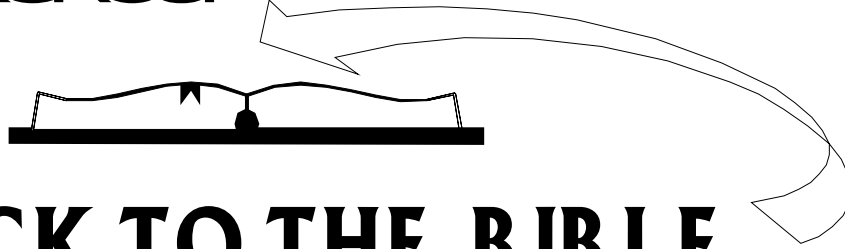


WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

**Teachings of the R C Church part 3 Biblestudy by Pastor Ing.M.v.d.Kraats
2011**

Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

For the sake of those who haven't read our previous letters and those who haven't yet grasped why we are writing about Roman Catholic doctrine, we'll begin with a quick explanation. We are concerned to see amongst evangelicals a rapidly increasing interest in working together with Roman Catholics. Charismatic Protestants, especially Americans, are the initiators of this. This is now also happening in the Netherlands. We have mentioned a few examples in our last letters and we'll now add a few more.

Lesson 5

Follow-up on previous letter.

The body of Christ is formed during the priest's prayer of consecration of the bread and the wine, namely the transubstantiation. He then offers the body of Christ on the altar to God, the Father; the term sacrificed Christ is used here. Finally, the priest and the RC believers consume the body of Christ (communicate). The consuming of the body of Christ is seen as synonymous to the eating of the manna in the Old Testament and the feeding of the five thousand in the New Testament. This then, is a short summary of what we covered about the eucharist in letter no 12. We also noted that although the eucharist is celebrated so often, the RC believer has no assurance of eternal life. Roman Catholics have to try, during their whole life, to earn their salvation by doing good works and taking part in the sacraments of the church.

In letter no 13 we pointed out the very important place that Mary has in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Not only does the RC Church believe that Mary was conceived without sin (immaculate conception) and that she lived a sinless life, but they also believe that after her death she was taken up bodily to heaven.

The apparitions of Mary, for example the one in Amsterdam and what pope John Paul 11 writes in his encyclicals cause us to believe that it won't be too long before the RC Church establishes the dogma of Mary as Co-Redemptrix. She is sitting next to Jesus Christ on the throne as Queen of Heaven. From this position she

pleads to Jesus Christ on behalf of the RC believers who pray to her. In spite of her Co-Mediatrix in heaven, the RC believer has no peace with God and no assurance of salvation. In this letter we'll study why the doctrine of Rome doesn't give this assurance.

The assurance of the Protestant and the uncertainty of the RC.

The following song is often sung in our churches and fellowships and when it is it's with the assurance that it's true for each one personally:

*All glory be to Jesus' name
in heaven, earth and sky.
Angels and men bow down to You
and satan has to flee.*

*(chorus)
I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.*

*I'll sing His praises all my life
until I leave this world.
For through His death He gave me life
My Saviour and my Lord.*

(The verses are not the original English version but a translation of the Dutch)

Roman Catholics will be able to sing the first verse with us. The chorus will be a problem for them. The church even forbids to think like this. The first two lines of the last verse are okay to sing but the last two are again forbidden. A Roman Catholic can only hope to get to heaven by means of the sacraments of the church, mother Mary, good works and purgatory.

The same terminology for different concepts.

When Protestants and Roman Catholics get together it sometimes seems as if they both speak the same language. The relationship between Catholics and Protestants has become easier since the second Vatican Council (1962-1965). When the conversation together turns to spiritual matters a neutral listener could conclude that they have a lot in common. A closer look shows however that the same terminology doesn't mean the same thing for everyone. This causes a lot of confusion and produces a false sense of common ground between Protestant and Catholic teaching. Here follow a few examples of what at first seems to be the same concepts;

Protestant believer: someone who believes in Jesus Christ, His redeeming work and His resurrection and through a personal faith in Him alone has become a child of God.

-Roman Catholic believer: someone who has been baptized into the RC Church

and participates in all her sacraments.(cat.846)

Grace for Protestants: God's free gift of forgiveness for sins.

Grace for RCs: a clear answer from God for good works such as becoming a saint; the angel Gabriel, for example said Mary was full of grace (without sin). (cat. 494, 1996 to 2005,2027,2617)

Born again Protestant: someone who has spiritually become a new creation in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit. This takes place after he has confessed to God his sins and accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He then becomes a child of God.

Born again RC: someone who has become a member by baptism and is born again into the RC church. Every RC is therefore born again. (cat.1262)

Conversion for Protestants: repentance for one's sinful life and a turning to Jesus Christ for salvation and redemption.

Conversion for RCs: conversion is not necessary for those baptized as baby, they are born again through baptism. The adult must turn his back on his sinful life and be baptized as member of the RC Church. (cat. 1257)

Forgiveness for Protestants: when we confess our sins to God the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin and then the confessed sins can be forgotten.

Forgiveness for RCs: confession of sins to the priest who on behalf of God forgives them (absolution).

Punishment for sin for Protestants: when we confess our sins to God He forgives us and the punishment for sin is removed, for Jesus Christ took our punishment upon Himself.

Punishment for sin for RCs: after confessing one's sins to the priest and receiving absolution the priest metes out a suitable punishment (penance); this punishment depends on the seriousness of the sin and can vary, from doing more prayers with the rosary, to making a pilgrimage to a holy place.

(cat.1460) It is almost certain that such a one will end up in purgatory after his death. (see separate section on this topic).

Baptism for Protestants: a public testimony and an outward sign of his conversion to Jesus Christ.

Baptism for RCs: the washing away of original sin, the new birth and membership into the RC Church. (cat.169, 1262, 1265, 1277-1279)

A priest for Protestants: every Protestant is a priest in order to fulfil the task of proclaiming the truths of the Bible; there is no hierarchy; the church with her members forms a royal priesthood.

A priest for RCs: he also believes in the priesthood of believers; it is carried out however by a few delegated priests, who after being trained in a seminary are set aside by the bishop for this task; there is a hierarchy in the priesthood: priests, high priests (bishops and cardinals) and a supreme priest (the pope); the priests are all men who have taken the oath of celibacy. (cat. 1546 and 1547)

Prayer for a Protestant: he prays directly to God through Jesus Christ believing that God hears him.

Prayer for a Roman Catholic: he prays directly to God through Jesus Christ but also to Mary whom he believes will help him or send his prayer on to her son Jesus Christ; the RC also prays to dead saints, people whom the pope has declared holy; he also prays formal prayers by using the rosary such as "Hail Mary" and "Our Father". (cat. 2665, 2675, 2678 and 2683)

The Lord's supper for Protestants: it is a symbol in which the death of the Lord Jesus for our sins is remembered.

The Lord's supper for RCs: the priest firstly changes the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ through his prayer of consecration and then he offers this to God the Father as a sacrifice after which the Roman Catholic eats the bread with the conviction that he is literally consuming Jesus Christ.

In general only the priest will drink the wine, as the real blood of Christ. At death the priest will preside over the last communion where the one who is dying will receive the bread as food for his journey to God. (viaticum, cat. 1524)

The Bible for Protestants: the word of God containing 66 books is the only foundation for the beginning, the maintaining and the completing of one's spiritual life on earth. The reformers described it as "sola scriptura".

The Bible for RCs: the word of God containing 66 canonical books and 5 apocryphal books and Tradition, also the decisions, rules and laws of the pope and councils of the last centuries are the guidelines for the Roman Catholic in this life and in death. The interpretation of the Bible is completely entrusted to the RC Church. (cat.8 and 82)

Purgatory for the dead.

Roman Catholics are throughout their lives continually being reminded by the sacraments that he not only receives forgiveness for his sins but that he must also suffer punishment for his sins. It is possible that even though he has received absolution at his last confession there still remains unconfessed sin for where no absolution has been granted. The church teaches that because of this the RC believer first spends some time in purgatory after his death. This doesn't apply to those who in this life reach such a holy position that they can go straight to heaven.

Purgatory shouldn't be confused with hell and is a place where the dead suffer their last punishments and where they are purified. No RC believer knows if he will go to purgatory, or for how long he will have to stay there. Most people however, expect this to happen to them. This is why loved ones dedicate a number of Masses (church service with the Eucharist) for the deceased. During the Mass there are special prayers for the deceased who is in purgatory. It is believed that the greater amount of Masses the shorter the time in purgatory will be. Loved ones are encouraged to pray for the deceased by the help of prayer cards with the photo of the deceased on it. It is also possible to shorten the time in purgatory by means of an indulgence. An indulgence is a written declaration from the church that a portion of the good works of a recognized saint can be used to lighten the load of the one in purgatory. The church receives payment for the extra Masses and the indulgence.

Purgatory and the Bible

In Latin the word for purgatory is purgatio. This word means cleansing from sin and comes from the verb purgare, meaning to cleanse, to purify or refine.

According to Tradition the following was formulated about purgatory at the council of Florence in 1438:

"The Council has decided that those who have passed away with a contrite

heart and in the love of God, before they have satisfactorily paid for their sins, those done intentionally or those through omission, will have their souls purified after death by punishment in purgatory; this punishment can be removed by the prayers of living believers, the sacrifices at Mass, the giving of alms and other good works which are normally done by believers for other believers in accordance with the teaching of the Church."

The Roman Catholic catechism of 1995 has based her doctrine on purgatory on the Councils of Florence and Trente (1546). Scripturally, the RC Church refers to the apocryphal book of 2 Makkabeen where we read the following:

"He therefore let Judas de Makkabeen bring a sin-offering so that they could be acquitted from their sins" (2 Makk.12:45) (cat.1030-1032)

The catechism writes amongst other things, the following about indulgences for the deceased:

"Seeing that the deceased believers, who are going through a refining process are from the one fellowship of the saints, we can help them in their suffering for their sins by acquiring indulgence for them". (cat. 1479)

"By means of indulgences the believer can acquire for himself and for the souls in purgatory forgiveness for the temporary punishment for sin". (cat. 1498)

Comment workgroup:

Protestants find it very difficult to accept the concept of purgatory and it's even more difficult to believe in it. The quotation from the Roman Catholic Bible isn't acceptable to a Protestant, as the book 2 Makkabeen is an apocryphal book which isn't included in the Protestant Bible. The Bible, excluding the apocryphal books, shows us very clearly that after death no one can do anything more about the position of his soul. The vital issue for one's destination after death is, if one has accepted or rejected Jesus Christ as one's Saviour on earth. Jesus makes this very clear in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man is desperate but it's impossible for Lazarus to reach him because of a great gap between them. It wasn't even possible to send a warning to earth for his brothers. There was no question of the rich man getting a "second chance" in purgatory. He couldn't cross the unbridgeable gap and had to stay where he was (Luke 16:19-31). We'll drop the subject here because, we know that you, as a Christian reader, could give more examples from the bible to dispute the existence of purgatory.

Praying to deceased saints.

The catechism says the following:

"Through prayer the pilgriming church unites herself with the prayers of the saints and asks for their intercession". (cat. 2692)

By canonizing some believers, this is to say, a formal announcement is made that those believers have heroically lived virtuous lives and have been faithful to God's grace, the church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness which is in her. By giving the believer those examples and intercessors she supports them in their hope". (cat.828)

(see above for the meaning of "grace" and "believer")

"The mediation of the saints". "Because the blessed in heaven are much closer united to Christ, they confirm, even more, the whole Church in holiness (...). They never cease speaking on our behalf before the Father through the one

Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ (...). That's why their brotherly care is such a wonderful encouragement for us in our weakness". (cat.956)

Praying to the dead is for a Protestant a very strange phenomenon. This is completely unknown to him. For the Roman Catholic it is just the opposite, it is part of their upbringing. According to their teaching the deceased and the living believers form an active fellowship.

The catechism says this:

"Fellowship with the deceased". By firstly recognizing this fellowship which exists in the mystical body of Christ, the pilgriming Church has from the beginning of Christianity celebrated with much reverence the memory of the deceased and because it is a holy and pious thought to pray for the dead, in order that, they can be freed from their sins and that they, in turn, pray for the living (2 Makk.12:45). Our prayers for them doesn't just help them but can make their intercession for us effective too". (cat.958)

To sum it up we can say that the RC Church teaches that there is interaction between the living and the dead. The living pray for the dead, that they will find relief in purgatory. The dead pray for the living as intercessors before God. The living also pray to the dead - usually those who are declared saints - so that they can intercede for them before God.

Comment workgroup:

There are several warnings in the Old Testament against asking the advice of the spirits of those who have died:

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists" (Lev.19:31; Deut.18:11).

"I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people". (Lev.20:6; 1 Chron.10:13,14)

Since the beginning of time man has had the tendency to want to make contact with his forefathers. God forbade the believing Israelite to do this. God is a jealous God and doesn't want man on earth to occupy himself with the spirits of those who have died. God desires that we turn solely to Him. This is the clear message given in the Old Testament. In the New Testament there is no mention of contact between believers on the earth and departed believers. The book of Hebrews writes the following after listing a whole number of spiritual giants:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw of everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us". (Heb.12:1)

We are allowed to follow their example in faith. The writer encourages us to put aside all that is a hindrance and be free of sin, but he never encourages us to pray to these deceased ones, not to mention that they pray for us. He doesn't say that we should in the future pray to Enoch, or Moses or Rahab or Samuel or David. No, in the parable, Abraham couldn't do anything for the rich man either. He also couldn't send a messenger from the dead to earth to give a warning.

"They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them". (Luke 16:29)

This applies to both Protestants and Roman Catholics. There is no contact possible or allowed between the living and the dead. When a Roman Catholic prays to Mary or to one of the saints he is making God jealous and is acting outside of the biblical guidelines.

Questions Lesson 5

- Does purgatory as first stay after death exist according to the Bible?
- Are we as bornagain Christians allowed to pray to dead persons?

Lesson 6

Beatification and canonization.

When a Roman Catholic refers to a saint then he doesn't mean a fellow believer but rather one whom the church has declared a saint. This is what the catechism says:

"By canonizing some believers, this is to say, that a formal announcement is made that those believers have heroically lived virtuous lives and have been faithful to God's grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness which is in her. By giving the believer these examples and intercessors she supports them in their hope". "The masculine and feminine saints have always been a source of inspiration and renewal in the most difficult moments in the history of the church". Holiness is, after all, the secret source and the infallible standard for her apostolic activities and missionary zeal".
(cat.827)

During the pope's 20 years in the papacy he has canonized 280 people (this is an average of 14 a year). The last person to be canonized was Edith Stein (her convent name being Theresa Benedicta a Cruce) on October 11 of this year. She was a Jew, converted to the Roman Catholic faith, and died in 1942 as a nun in Auschwitz concentration camp. The Jewish community objected to her canonization, but the pope insisted.

The official Roman Catholic magazine, "One two one" states in the edition of October 23 of this year the following:

"The required proof of a miracle before someone is canonized occurred in 1987 when an American girl was brought into hospital suffering from medicine poisoning. It was necessary to have a liver transplanted but after her mother and many other believers prayed to Theresa Benedicta a Cruce she recovered completely without needing an operation".

Before someone is canonized (declared a saint) beatification takes place (declared blessed). The present pope has chosen, up to now, 805 persons (this is an average of 40 a year). After the beatification there usually follows some time later canonization.

The encyclopaedia explains it so:

"Declaring someone blessed (beatification) is a declaration from the pope that the deceased shares in the heavenly glory because of his heroic virtues and so can be honoured. The difference between this and declaring someone a saint is that the beatification is less formal and the beatified person can't be publicly honoured just anywhere, but only in those places chosen by the pope."

The last beatification took place on October 3 of this year in Croatia. During the pope's visit cardinal Stepinac was declared blessed. There were more than a

hundred thousand present for the ceremony. The Simon Wiesenthal Centre objected to the beatification because the cardinal had collaborated with the nazi regime during the war. This is called the Ustaja regime in Croatia.

Comment workgroup:

It seems to us that there aren't too many Roman Catholics who are declared blessed. 40 people a year is not very much for a membership of 900 million. These 40 people have earned a direct passage to heaven. From a biblical point of view is this not possible. Nobody can go to heaven by means of his own merits.

"All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no-one who does good, not even one". (Psalm 14:3)

"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins". (Ecc.7:20)

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No-one is good-except God alone". (Mark 10:18)

"Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law: rather, through the law we become conscious of sin". (Rom.3:20)

"know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no-one will be justified".(Gal.2:16)

Apart from the Roman Catholic Church's unbiblical ideas, there also arises the question if the pope can and may decide who goes to heaven. This is completely unacceptable to a Protestant. Only God can judge this and man has nothing to say in the matter. We are told not to judge (Matt.7:1) When Paul spoke at the meeting of the Areopagus he said the following to the Greeks:

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead".(Acts 17:30,31)

God is therefore the One who will judge righteously and not the pope on behalf of the

Conclusion and topic of next letter.

When we consider the above mentioned subjects, we see that the hope of a fruitful co-operation between Protestants and Roman Catholics is once more undermined. As we said in the two previous letters, Roman Catholic doctrine obscures the Lord Jesus and his redeeming work at Calvary. This is also clearly the case with regards to purgatory, beatification and canonization.

It is not easy to summarize the teaching of the RC Church in its entirety. The Church herself has compiled a catechism of this consisting of 733 pages. We'll try to give you a summary of this catechism in the next letter in case you feel it's all becoming rather bitty. We'll also look at the influence the Vatican and the pope have on the ecumenical movement. The next letter will be therefore the fourth and last letter concerning the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church.

Questions Lesson 6

- Do we believe that after death the R C Church can say if a person is holy enough to go to heaven out of purgatory?
- Are there different ranks among Christians when they die?

Consulted books, cassettes, etc.

Recommended:

1. "Saving faith, How does Rome define it?", William Webster, Christian Resources; 304 S.W. 19th St, Battleground, WA 9864 America.
2. "A Woman Rides the Beast", Dave Hunt, ISBN 1-56507-199-9
3. "Abusing Memory", Jane Gumprecht M.D., ISBN 1-885767-27-7
4. "Romanism", Robert M. Zins, Th.M., ISBN 0-9637141-4-7

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