Comparing Roman Catholicism with Protestantism

Part 1 of 2: Catholicism and Protestantism: The History and Organization of the Roman Catholic Church
with Darrell Bock, Scott Horrell, Michael Svigel
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Welcome to The Table, where we discuss issues of God and culture. And our topic today is a comparison between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. We're going to talk a lot about the history of the development of the Roman Catholic Church and some of the differences that exist between Catholics and Protestants because sometimes people are not aware of the differences that exist and why we have Roman Catholicism on the one hand and Protestantism on the other.

I am Darrell Bock, executive director of the Howard G. Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership and Cultural Engagement, and I am executive director of cultural engagement for that wing of the center. And to my right is Scott Horrell, who is a doctor and professor of systematic theology here at Dallas Theological Seminary. And to my left is Michael Svigel, who is also a doctor and a professor of systematic theological at Dallas Theological Seminary. So I'm surrounded by full-blown theologians today.

Truly good men.

I – here I am, this little bible reader, and I've got these theologians to my right and my left. So anything that I say can and will be used against me in the court of law.

So thank you, gentlemen, for coming in to discuss this topic. We've been wanting to do this for some time.

Thanks.

We're going to begin by talking first about Catholics and Protestants and just getting some statistics in front of you so that you understand the relative sizes and makeup of the groups and for that, Dr. Horrell has brought his trusty pie charts. And so give – tell us some of the issues between Catholics and Protestants in terms of size of groups and that kind of thing.
Well, it is interesting. The Pew Forum just in January published some things along this line. You have about 1.1 billion professing Catholics in the world, maybe a little more than that; 1.2. What is interesting is the demographic shift all around the world. In 1910, 65 percent of the Roman Catholics in the world were in Europe. That has dwindled down to about 34 percent today, and – 24 percent, excuse me, and the group in Latin America has grown significantly, as one might expect, with population and all of that. But from 1910, when there were less than one percent Roman Catholic in Sub-Saharan Africa, today there are 16 percent of the world Catholics are in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Asian Rim has also grown rather extraordinarily too, from less than – well, about five percent, thinking of the Philippines and other countries like that, or in India there's still a sizable church, a Roman Catholic Church, so now 12 percent of the world's Catholics are in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

The United States has always been – or I should say North America – rather slender here. In 1910 we were about five percent of the world Catholicism, and today it remains about eight percent. What is interesting in the United States is that the number of, let's say, Caucasian, Catholics is seeing significant fall away, whether into non-religion or whether into other groups. What is keeping the ranks fairly healthy is the immigration, particularly from Latin America. So lots of fascinating things are happening in the world today as we now have a new pope as well.

Now, did you mention the Latin American population of Catholics and what its make up is? I don't know.

Latin America is surely far and away the largest group of Roman Catholics today. That's about 40 percent of world Catholicism, and there's something of an ebb and flow. Largely there's been a drift either towards secularism or even into evangelicalism, particularly Pentecostalism, Neo-Charismatic movements. There is concerted effort, on the other hand, by the Roman Catholic Church to stop the flow and indeed gain many back in. And one example is, of course, now Francis I, our first Latin American pope from Buenos Aires, Argentina, faithful as a conservative Catholic through it all.
And one of the first events now that he's launching is a World Youth Day or a Roman Catholic Church World Youth Day, which happens about every two years. But that is staging in Rio. And the – interestingly, the advertisement for it, which my wife regularly watches online is almost completely what we would call evangelical, talking about how we as a Catholic Church needs to be reaching out and proclaiming the love of Christ and much, much more. So there is an effort to redraw youth back into the church.

And one more example: there is a very charismatic Roman Catholic priest, Marcelo Berti, in Sao Paulo, and he is well known for his speaking as well as his singing, with kind of a rock band in the background, or a very much Latin popular music. He's just built a huge cathedral in Sao Paulo. It's called The Mother of God. It seats 6,000. Fourteen thousand can also be there standing up. Outside are the huge screens which accommodates another 80,000 people. There is a strong desire to draw Brazil and of course other Latin American countries back into the fold for the Roman Catholics.

Just quickly, why don't you summarize the time that you spent in Latin America so that people know that you have direct contact with that part of the world?

Sure. I started out in Puerto Alegre in the very far south, which has a well known –

South of?

So we're about straight across from Johannesburg, South Africa, the largely German/Italian area with a very large Roman Catholic constituency, many trained even in Germany elsewhere, Leonardo Boff and others out of that area. Then I moved to Sao Paulo, and I was there a total, with my wife and children and I, a total of about 18 years, taught across the street from the huge Pontifical University in Sao Paulo with about 40,000 students.

So when Argentina appraisal Brazil, you root for Argentina?
Scott Horrell: Plays Brazil?

Darrell Bock: Yeah, in -

Scott Horrell: Are you kidding?

Darrell Bock: Oh, wow.

Scott Horrell: No, Argentina in that sense are our arch enemies, unless they make it into the finals too, so.

Darrell Bock: There you go, okay. Very good.

Scott Horrell: And we're not. So we'll vote for them.

Darrell Bock: So you've attached yourself to Brazil and are – have Brazilian soccer blood.

Scott Horrell: Rather thoroughly.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, okay. Very good. Well, now that we've got your theological pedigree thoroughly presented –

Michael Svigel: Good. Yeah. When we talk about Roman Catholicism, we have to always ask the question of when are we talking about it, where are we talking about it and who are we talking about. So the things that Martin Luther, for instance, were responding to more or less don't exist anymore. The church itself, the Catholic Church, has gone through several reforms of their own and several phases of evolution themselves. So what Luther was responding to primarily, and even some of his predecessors – we think of Wyclif and Hus as well, some, many, many others going back to the 13th centuries and earlier.
Luther was responding to a Roman Catholic Church that was very much part of the social political structures. They had doctrines and practices that had developed contrary even to their own official pronouncement centuries earlier. And so you're seeing in the 13th, 14th century Roman Catholic Church, what Roman Catholics today would see as actual moves away from the intended stream of their tradition. What Luther was responding to primarily was the Catholics' doctrines of salvation, justification, especially their abandonment of what Luther thought was the Augustinian view of salvation.

Darrell Bock
And we'll come back to that.

Michael Svigel
We'll come back to that. The abuses, the luxurious lives of the popes and the papacy and the functioning of the papacy too close to the world. And so a lot of these things that many, many people, including Roman Catholics, were outraged about, and Roman Catholics today would see those excesses as unacceptable. Substantially, the main essence of what Luther eventually settled on was the doctrine of justification, as he saw, better understood in Paul's writings as well as in the history of the early Church. Surprisingly, what Luther was very comfortable with was a very high view of the Lord's Supper. Probably discuss that a little bit. Wasn't exactly the same as the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation, but it was much higher than many Protestants and evangelicals since then.

Darrell Bock
So the difference between the elements becoming the body and blood and the – and, if I can say, the elements being surrounded by the presence of Christ.

Michael Svigel
Right, right, exactly. So he was comfortable with that. He had a very high view of the church and the function of the church. Infant baptism did something. The – he had – the big deal was, justification by faith, by grace through faith alone and then the hierarchy of the church and the authority of the pope.

Darrell Bock
Which led to Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers.

Michael Svigel
Exactly, right.
Okay. Well, we will come back to these two areas in more detail in a minute. Let me put one other term or set of terms in front of you and let you both play with them a little bit. Sometimes we discuss – and this isn't just a Catholic/Protestant discussion but generally in thinking about ecclesiology – we'll talk about the difference between what we call "high church" and "low church." And what do those terms suggest, and where, generally speaking, does Roman Catholicism fall on that scale, if I can say it that way? Is it

The high church would be typically a church with a strong hierarchy, top down, and a strong liturgy that would be fairly universal. So the Roman Catholic Church would be the highest of the high churches with its formality –

– and the pope and everything down through Roman and into the rest of the world. The Eastern Orthodox would also be fairly much a high church, though they don't see themselves quite in that vein, but with their metropolitans or patriarchs as the regional leaders under the kind of chief amongst those in Constantinople or now Istanbul. So the high church would again be that: hierarchy liturgy are stressed. Liturgy, sated with meaning.

So Anglican church, Episcopalian Church or a high, generally speaking, high church –

There's high and low Anglican churches, as you well know.

Yeah, that's right, right.

Low church would be those which would see a more lay-oriented and comfortable and a kind of service that would be more indigenous to wherever it is, with a plurality of leadership sometimes.

So a looser form, extensively.

Yes.
**Darrell Bock**

And we're talking about an emphasis then as you move from high to low, you tend to move in a direction that emphasizes the priesthood of the believer perhaps a little more because everybody's seen to participate. There's less direction from the front in the worship, if I can say it that way.

**Scott Horrell**

Right.

**Darrell Bock**

That's where the liturgy comes from, that kind of thing, because, as we're going to be talking about shortly, when we think about the Roman Catholic Church in particular and its theology and the way in which the church at least mediates or directs in the salvation process and in the service, this leads to a sense in which the minister really is a – how do I say it – a minister alongside the individual as opposed to the individual being their own entity before God. There's a sense in which the minister can be seen to minister grace in a way that you don't see in Protestantism. Is that a fair summary of what's going on?

**Michael Svigel**

Yeah. That's a good summary. One thing with high churches is, from church to church, you more or less know what to expect.

**Darrell Bock**

Good point.

**Michael Svigel**

You know who's in charge. There's no question about who's in charge here. You know that when you walk in you're going to expect a certain order of worship. There might be slight variety, but you're –

**Darrell Bock**

You're talking about in high churches.

**Michael Svigel**

In high churches.

**Darrell Bock**

Yeah.

**Michael Svigel**

Low churches you don't know what –

**Darrell Bock**

Who knows? Yeah. [Laughter]
Michael Svigel: Right. You never know what to expect from church to church, even within the same denomination. But that is also key is the function of the actual church leader, the priest or the bishop, is really mediating something that you can get in no other way but through the services and through the mass, through the ministration of that leader.

Darrell Bock: And this leads to the idea that the church is the true church because of the way in which the minister – how I'm going to say it is mediates and provides access to grace or to blessing –

Michael Svigel: That's right.

Darrell Bock: – in a way that, generally speaking, you don't hear about in Protestant Church, generally speaking.

Scott Horrell: We might add one other thing, and that is the issue of accountability. In the high church, there's a very tight accountability on through the hierarchy. In the low church – and that can describe many different kinds of different denominations as well as independent churches. There are varying degrees of accountability; some hardly any accountability at all. It all orient around the man of God, or the pastor, so to speak, who – around which the congregation gathers. Other times there's more a body of Christ plurality of leadership, so a mutual accountability.

Darrell Bock: So – well, I was going to say, there's a structure for accountability, whether the accountability's actually exercised or not, sometimes, given the way particularly the history, the recent history with the Roman Catholic Church and some of the scandals that we've seen; whether it's been – whether it's actually executed or not is a question of entirely another matter.

Michael Svigel: Good point, yeah.
Okay. Well, let's start off with probably the most obvious difference that exists between Protestants and Catholics, and that is that, generally speaking, Protestants don't have a pope, [laughter] it'd be fair to say. But the Roman Catholic Church does. Let's talk a little bit about the development of the papacy because I think most people are very unaware of how – and in fact, this is something we're going to see in all the discussion we're going to have, how doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church very much develops in – over time and formalizes as it moves through different phases. This is why I think Michael's point earlier about, well, when you talk about the Roman Catholic Church, you've got to ask kind of the when, where and who questions.

Right.

And so let's talk a little bit about the papacy. The claim is, of course, that the pope is the Vicar of Christ who was given the keys to the kingdom, in Matthew 16, when Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ in Matthew 16, and that this has been an unbroken line since the time of Peter. I can distinctly remember being Rome and walking in the Church of –

Of St. Paul's, yes.

– of St. Paul, exactly. And you walk in, and you see the row of popes, starting with Peter running all the way through an unbroken line, all the way up; well, at least when I was there the last time, of course, it was Pope John Paul II.

They only have space for about three more, in fact.

So yeah, I don't think it's a prediction of when Christ is returning. But anyway, but it is an interesting thing to see, to actually walk in there and see one after another, this unbroken line of Vicars of Christ. Of course the Bishop of Rome – the pope is the Bishop of Rome, and then the Bishop of Rome is viewed as the, how do I want to say it – among equals, so I'm forgetting the first word. But anyway, he has primacy over the rest of the cardinals. And that's where he inherits the authority from.
So that's the claim, if you will. What about the history of the development of the papacy? And I ask this question because of my son, Stephen, went to a Roman Catholic university. He went St. John's in New York City. And he took a course on the history of the church, and the book that he was assigned was The History of the Roman Catholic Church, and it was written by Hans Kung, which meant that he was evaluating this papacy claim. And literally, I read the book while my son was in the class, to interact with him. And he actually walked me through this history. It's actually pretty fascinated.

So with that as a – I think I've set the table for the discussion.

**Michael Svigel**

Sure. Let me first say that, when you walk into St. Paul's outside the wall in that church and you look at that unbroken line, it's a great idea. It makes things really simple. The problem is it has to cut a lot of historical corners. What's interesting is the pope in Rome, the Roman – Bishop of Rome originally started out as the, what we might call a pastor of a local church in Rome presiding over the city churches of small scale. However, the Roman Church very, very quickly, already in the New Testament time, grew in power, wealth. By the second century, it was a force to be reckoned with. It had members that were part of the Imperial Court. And so from the start, the Church in Rome had, just by virtue of being in Rome, the capital of the empire, a privileged position with finances and power and influence. And so that's just a historical reality.

**Darrell Bock**

And we're a little bit suspicious that the Gospel of Mark may actually be written to or have some association with the Roman Church as well. So we're very early on. It has – it does have a _____.

**Michael Svigel**

Very, very influential. And so there's no doubt about that. But it wasn't the only one. There are other – Jerusalem was very influential, Antioch extremely influential, Ephesus for a while, Smyrna, wherever you had apostles living for a long time and their disciplines. So it was one of many what eventually became – started to be called Episcopacies, Episcopales –

**Darrell Bock**

Because these are regional hubs, basically.
Right, the regional hubs, and usually very, very large cities. So they had resources. And from these you had the missionary work flowing from these churches. What's interesting is, for the most part, everything west of Rome, and including Western North Africa, were daughter churches of the Church in Rome through their missionary efforts for several centuries. And so whenever there were problems, whenever there were issues, whenever they needed leadership, they appealed to the mother church in Rome. So really there was no question that, in the West, Rome was the mother church, just by historical fact.

What happened, though, was there was often a jostling then and – when you get into the third, fourth, fifth centuries between these other major hubs. So Alexandria in Egypt and Jerusalem and Antioch and Rome and then eventually Constantinople, once that – you have two capitals of the empire. And so when the church becomes very much intertwined with the political realities, now you have several major cities and major bishops competing for prominence. The Church in Rome, very early on, tried to assert that they were, because of Matthew 16:18, "On this rock I will build my church," referring in their understanding to Peter, that they should be the presiding church, the major city. And so –

Yeah, I have a –

– it develops then throughout the history from that point.

I have a list here. It's interesting. This comes out of a dictionary of theology, and Victor in 190 rebukes the Asia Minor churches because they don't celebrate Easter on the correct date. Stephen 254-257 claims a Petrine deposit. He's actually the first one to make a direct appeal in language in a conscious kind of way as he interacts with North African churches that have heretics who are supervising the sacraments. So you see these moves. You see some of this in some of the apostolic father letters where Rome is trying to put pressure on Corinth, for example, and Corinth pushes back. So these are important tensions.

So it's not as clear. You said "cut historical corners." It's not as clear in these early days that they have this right or that everyone understands they have this right as much as they're contending for it. Is that –
I would say that's absolutely true. And it is important to note that even though the Eastern Orthodox Church, the church, primarily the Greek-speaking church early on in the East, acknowledged the importance of Rome and the importance of the Bishop of Rome as one of a confraternita brotherhood of bishops. They never accepted this supremacy or papal infallibility or any of the things that Rome obviously came to in the course of history.

So I think it's an important point to realize that this is something that develops. It grows over time. Most of the time it's understandable. Sometimes it makes sense when the Roman Empire is being attacked by the Vandals and the Goths and Visigoths. The church is there as a stabilizing factor. And they did a lot of good, but only afterwards you see the results of that are a very – a cozying up between the secular and sacred authorities and this – the Roman Catholic doctrine in the Medieval Period of the two swords. So they interpret this passage where Peter says to Jesus, "I have two swords." And Jesus says, "That's enough." Well, later exegetes interpret that as saying, "Well, the one sword is the sacred authority. The other sword is the secular authority, and therefore…"

Well then, I have to write a new section of commentary.

Exactly. So this is a case where biblical interpretation's following this developing theology.

Now, you mentioned the Greek Orthodox Church or the Eastern Church. We've got to stop there a little bit because they recognize the pope as the head of the Western Church, but they do not accept the idea that he has authority in their area, which shows a slight difference of approach ecclesiologically; even though there's a hierarchy, they're contending for an equality that's a little bit more regional, if I can say, even though those are big regions, a little more regional in the way it's viewed as opposed to one who's over everybody else. Fair enough?

I would say that's fair.

And they still look to Jerusalem. They call that "the mother church," which was not presided over by Peter, by the way.
James was the head of Jerusalem Council, you'll recall, so.

**Darrell Bock**

Right. Yeah. So those are some examples of the historical corners. Now, the papacy really begins to formalize their decreed layers in the fourth and fifth century. Leo the Great 440 to 461 begins to really bolster the role and claim it and almost exercise the authority of it. And my sense is that he's kind of the – he's the first one to use the term that actually comes out of the Roman Empire directly, the Pontifex Maximus, the supreme priest, if you want to think of that, or chief priest, you could think of it that way, the "top dog."

And so in that sense, we begin to formalize this. But the doctrine really continues to develop really beyond that once we come into the Medieval Period, et cetera. The date that I have here for the claims of infallibility tied to the pope, 1059, which is much later. The structure of electing the pope through the College of the Cardinals, formalized at that same time period; so much further on down the road. So when are we talking about? What's happening at a given time?

When we come to the latest development, the pope speaking ex cathedra, okay, from the throne, when he is exercising his ability to interpret infallibly on behalf of the magisterium, which is where we're going to go next. That's 18 –

**Michael Svigel**

1870, yeah.

**Darrell Bock**

– 1870. So we're very, very late in the game in the overall scheme of things. But I think walking through that, just walking through that history and seeing the – kind of the blocks fall into place shows you part of what we're talking about, that this is a church that has developed its doctrine. It develops its doctrine around, we're going to be talking about shortly the magisterium, the tradition coming alongside the Scripture to develop really the mechanism of the church, the hierarchy of the church, the “highness” of the church; we want to think of it that way. And so what we have later on in the history of the church isn't necessarily what we were dealing with early on.
Michael Svigel

Correct, yeah. Yeah, and I might just mention a resource here, historical resource, a good classic work, pretty accessible by most people, is a book by Margaret Deanesly called The History of the Medieval Church, which basically looks at a period from about 600 to the eve of the Reformation and traces exactly what you describe: that development; when do things come in, when do various popes add various levels of authority. It's a very eye-opening study for further study on this.

Scott Horrell

We should probably add here, Darrelll, that there have been quite a few missteps by popes as well. Athanasius, the great defender of the Trinity, was condemned by Pope Liberius, and the list goes on to where you had at one point even three popes contending with each other. So there have been some sloppy things happening in history. Gregory I, Gregory the Great –

Darrell Bock

Great, yeah.

Scott Horrell

Perhaps the –

Darrell Bock

Around 600.

Scott Horrell

– most remarkable organizer of the church, he said something interesting. He said that anyone was the antichrist who took upon himself the role of the title Universal Bishop. Now that's what Gregory the Great said, and yet that's the title that virtually all modern popes assume.

Darrell Bock

Yeah, and –

Scott Horrell

So – well, I was going to say that in 1870 then, we take that big step of the pope speaking ex cathedra, “from the throne,” infallible dogma. And that happens very, very rarely. The last time was in 1950. Pope Pius XII proclaimed that as absolutely dogma for all Roman Catholics, Mary's physical bodily ascension into heaven. She did not die, but was rather taken there by her son.
Yes, and we'll – when we come to Mary, we're going to discuss the development of that teaching as well. The papal infallibility strikes me, in looking at the history and – part of history is sociology, and – strikes me as the Catholic Church's reaction to the encroachment of modernism in the church and trying to get control of the doctrine by adding this layer of authority on top of what – the way the church operated as a way of stopping certain encroachments into the church.

Okay, well, that's an overview of the papacy. We aren't going to take as long on the other discussions we're going to have, but that's obviously important. The pope is certainly the most visible personal figure tied to the Roman Catholic Church and he may well be the most visible personal figure tied to Christendom worldwide in terms of how people perceive Christianity from the outside, which is why whenever a pope is elected, it's a big deal; it's automatically international news. Everybody covers it. Even CNN and Fox are there together holding hands as the pope is elected.

And so it's not an unusual – it's not unusual to see a lot of attention drawn because the pope is such a visible figure. And actually, that's one of the – how can I say it? That's one of the sociological elements of the Catholic Church is it is a structured church that has some logic to the way it's structured, which makes operating under it, at least from the point of view of the way it looks, seen very organized as compared to, say, if I can say this, Protestantism, which doesn't have a pope, doesn't have a singular church to appeal to, that kind of thing, much more scattered in the way it operates, much less organized in the way it functions, which I think is an important sociological observation.

And it's very – that's very appealing to a lot of people who do tire out of the disorganization and lack of the authority in some of the Protestant traditions.
Darrell Bock: Exactly. Okay. Well, let's shift now to that which is – to an idea that's very much related to the papacy, and certainly the pope has responsibility for it in some way, and that is the magisterium. Scott, what do you understand by the magisterium? What is it? Whenever we go to terms that are Latin, we've got to help most of the people who don't work with the dead language, or mostly dead language. And so what is the magisterium, and then let's relate it also to the role of Scripture and tradition, which is another important difference, I think, between Protestants and Catholics. Protestants will hold up the doctrine of Sola Scriptura as something that is to be affirmed. And actually, Catholics have a variation of Sola Scriptura too, but they apply it differently. So how does that work?

Scott Horrell: Well, magisterium would be the official teaching dogmatic body of the Roman Catholic Church. Usually, it's related to the cardinals, and finally the large house of cardinals and the leading theologians in the movement; but finally, that all comes under, of course, the pope himself. But the magisterium is the authoritative interpreter of not only Scripture, but Roman Catholic tradition.

So tradition: it is interesting. I have here, Darrelll, it might be interesting to read out of the catechism of the Catholic Church.

Darrell Bock: Now, you said you were going to mention some resources. So why don't you tell people what that – exactly that is and, if they're interested, where they can get it, because it is a way to get a reference to what the Catholic Church teaches.

Scott Horrell: This is the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It's the second edition; that's important. It was done in Latin in 1994, English 1995. You can get it Doubleday various editions since then, but this is the official teaching, the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and I might add there's an awful lot in there we will agree with right down the line. There is also a – this is 800 pages, so whoever wants to read it can.


Darrell Bock: The Cliff Notes version?
Scott Horrell

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. And that's a lot more accessible. Both are in this question/answer kind of format, so it makes it very easy. Those are some on the Roman Catholic side, and of course many other books out. Those who are evangelicals may want to argue some and look at some of the differences. One is John Armstrong, The Catholic Mystery, this details some of the things where traditionally Protestants and Catholics have differed. Ronald Zinn, as well, another one called Romanism. There are many arguments on many sides. But those are basic, helpful books that may be useful.

The issue of Sola Scriptura, of the great cry of the Reformation, versus Scripture plus tradition is perhaps the fundamental difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Evangelicalism.

Darrell Bock

Because everything grows out of the difference and the way in which it's applied. You're talking about it's a hermeneutic, a way of doing theology.

Scott Horrell

It sure is. If you say that the Holy Spirit has infallibly guided the church not only to interpret the scriptures but to interpret the interpretations of the scriptures, then you may be confessing the bodily ascension of Mary into heaven; well, you surely will be as well. With the Reformation, as Mike has brought up very well, there was an outcry that some of the traditions have surpassed and contradicted the Scripture. And that's where the rub comes. Here's what the Catholic Catechism does say, and it might be helpful just to hear it: "Sacred Scripture and – a sacred tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other, for both of them flowing out of the same divine wellspring come together in some fashion to form one thing and move toward the same goal."
Now, they first talk about sacred Scripture as the speech of God that's put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. They go on to talk about the inerrancy of the Scripture, at least regarding issues of saving faith. But then it goes on, "and holy tradition transmits in its entirety the word of God." It comes down through the Apostles. One paragraph here, two sentences, is important: "As a result, the church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of revelation is entrusted does not derive for certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."

Well, that is very interesting, and because I work in New Testament and work with Second Temple Judaism, it's interesting to hear this juxtaposition to revelation and tradition because you see it in Judaism as well in the development of the Mishnah and the Talmud. But it's interesting that in Judaism it's handled differently. It's not moving towards one authoritative tradition that trumps everything else, but what you get is – are the voices. In Judaism you get the voices of what various rabbis have said. Now, there certainly is a dominant position, a majority position that's always stated oftentimes at the end of a particular discussion. But you get the conversation as opposed to this driving to the singularities.

So there are actually different models of how to deal with revelation and tradition alongside one another. And this is an interesting question to probe a little bit, and that is: in Protestantism, although we emphasize Sola Scriptura, there is a sense in which we work – I'll say this carefully – we work with tradition even though we distinguish it from Scripture and don't give it an equal status, and that difference is very, very important in this conversation. Is that right?

Yes, indeed.