Comparing Roman Catholicism with Protestantism

Part 2 of 2: Catholicism and Protestantism: Contrasting Distinctives of Protestantism and Catholicism

with Darrell Bock, Scott Horrell, Michael Svigel
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So this magisterium, this role of tradition this – and it's designed to function – let's talk about how it functions – it's designed to deal with, if I can say it, new situations that come up that need the judgment of the church. And so if scripture doesn't directly address something, if you have a tradition that comes alongside and this is authoritative, it can be addressed and solved, if I can say it that way, all at the same time. And again, we're back to this picture of a structure that is at one level very functional because it solves dilemmas in ways that are more straightforward than perhaps other models.

Scott Horrell: And that's not to deny the debates with it, those different voices you're talking about within historic Catholicism, not – we tend to look back and think all Catholicism has been unanimously what it is today. Not so. Even back to the 11th century, the debate over whether Mary was born without sin, Anselm said, "No, you can't say that." So did Aquinas. He said, "That takes away the glory from Christ." And yet on the other side was Eadmer and then Duns Scotus arguing, no, for her to be the vessel of the Savior's birth without sin, she too much be without sin. So you have these debates going back and forth that are formalized sometimes centuries later: the Council of Trent or then of course the Vatican and so forth.

Well, Immaculate Conception doesn't take place as a formal doctrine that's recognized officially by the church until the 19th century. So I mean – so you're – again, we've got this model of watching people reflect, reflect, and even though this move towards infallibility and decision making is somewhat selectively exercised, it's selectively exercised at very key points –

Scott Horrell: Indeed.

– to resolve things, and sometimes it make take centuries before an official stamp is there, but you should never forget that that official stamp is there, but you should never forget that that official stamp is actually reflecting, because of the role of tradition, a long conversation that has been taking place in which this formal stamp at the end, my German picture of the stempel and the role of the stempel in German culture where you stamp something and that makes it official.
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**Michael Svigel**  It becomes what they call "dogma." Rather than just doctrines that different people have held different – it becomes a dogma of the church that is now binding on all people in the church.

**Darrel Bock**  Okay. Well, that's the magisterium and the role of scripture and tradition. And it's very clear that in Protestantism, of course, with the Sola Scripture, you don't have tradition functioning in nearly the same way. There may be traditions, little "t," operating in various denominations that help to define what they are sociologically and how they operate and what they hold to and won't let go. But it isn't handled in the same kind of way, generally speaking, in the Protestant tradition. The claim always is: if you can't take it back to scripture, then something's missing, and it is – it doesn't quite have the level of authority and bindedness, if I can say it that way, generally speaking.

Scott Horrell: There is the issue of the Eastern Orthodox, as well, which do not approach tradition the same as the Roman Catholic Church. If you go back to the Seven Councils trended in the eighth century, and those become the absolute that interpret scripture. But then there are various traditions with small "t" that come after that. So they have certainly rejected the infallibility of the pope and his primacy as well, and that constitutes another major group of Christendom.

**Darrel Bock**  So you've got basically three models, if I can say it that way. You've got the Sola Scriptura model, which is Protestantism. You've got scripture and tradition together in the Roman Catholic Church with that tradition ongoing through the authority of the pope. And then in between, if I can say it that way, you've got the Greek Orthodox Church, which has a role for tradition, but that tradition is defined in relationship to councils primarily as opposed to an ongoing office that now takes care of things. Fair to –

Scott Horrell: The Anglican Church and some other things in there too, the Archbishop of Canterbury and decisions to be made. But that basically gets the spectrum of things, yeah.

**Darrel Bock**  Yeah, I mean and the Anglican concern in kind of a similar role of playing between their – kind of their hybrid Protestants maybe or hybrid Catholics. I'm not sure which label to give them because they fall in between of course the origins of the Anglican Church had very little to do ultimately with theology. So that's a whole other conversation, probably a whole other podcast when we want to talk about kings and queens and all that kind of thing.
Let's go to another big area that is important that we've alluded to in that we see the church as this interpreter on the one hand. Now let's come to the Doctrine of Justification and think through the role of the church, not just as interpreter, but also as to some degree mediator of blessing because I think this is another – if we think of Sola Scriptura as being one big difference hermeneutically, this is the other big area that we walk into: how justification is seen and the church's role in saving, if I can say it that way. So what are we dealing with here, Mike?

**Michael Svigel**

Sure. One thing we have to make clear is that no official church doctrine would – Roman Catholic Church dogma would say that people are saved by works. This is absolutely reprehensible. Now at popular lay level folk theology, some people may think that. But some people in the Protestant tradition think that. They would say that we are absolutely saved by grace, but how they define that grace and how you receive that grace is really the issue. And so in the Medieval as well as the Post-Reformation Catholic Church, grace is treated almost as if it's a substance, something that can be dispensed through various avenues of change and means: through the magisterium, through the official ordained leadership of the church, participating in various rites that are prescribed, the mass, the Eucharist, Baptism, the various sacraments, that these things become means of saving grace, grace that improves you, perfects you, moves you more and more toward the goal of salvation. So justification really is seen as a process in which you participate in the life of the church, receiving grace.

**Darrel Bock**

And the more grace you have the better off you are.

**Michael Svigel**

You are, yeah. And that's a somewhat crude way of saying it, but in contrast to the Protestant model, grace is something – we also believe in means of saving grace. We would – Protestants would say it is the word and faith. So by grace are you saved through faith. It's interesting when you look at commentators in the Medieval Period on Ephesians 2:8-9, Protestants read them and they think how could Roman Catholics not see it's by grace are you saved through faith, not of yourselves. Well, you see comments on that that say, "Well, it's by grace that you're saved through the faith," meaning the Roman Catholic faith, and that not of yourselves, the whole system itself is a gift of God.
So you have ways of working around these things. So they would definitely say you're saved by grace, but how you receive that grace and what that grace does and whether it's a one-time entrance into the life, the Christian life, or if it's a constant movement toward salvation, that's really the big difference between Protestantism after Luther and the Roman Catholic Church.

And so this is why the mass becomes such a central feature –

– of the Roman Catholic process. I used to always ask myself, "Why do you go to mass everyday," I mean to a very faithful Catholic. I mean it just, it just seemed – coming out of a – I came out of a Protestant tradition, obviously, so it seemed odd that there would be every single day. But this idea of the dispensing of grace on a daily –

Yeah, why would you eat everyday? That's the same kind of question.

Exactly. That's right.

You need the nourishment in the process.

And so the picture is of the way in which the mass is executed. Let's talk a little bit about the theology of the mass itself because it's really –

Scott Horrell: Could I go back just a little bit, though?

Yeah, sure. Go ahead.
Scott Horrell: Because I think what we're talking about, even in terms of justification's importance, all the way back to the fall, how is the fall interpreted when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit and were alienated from God. It's very interesting that the catechism itself says that Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin, hence deprived of original righteousness, and right after that, again, weakened; human nature is weakened in its powers. They don't see, as Luther and Calvin argued, that there is a deadness in sin and transgression blinded by Satan and all the rest.

**Darrel Bock**

It's damaged but it's not devastating.

**Scott Horrell**

Yes. And so that has – that plays into then how are we made right with God, as Adam and Eve were apparently brought back to zero, but then the actual becoming righteous, that becoming just, is that working out of the process. And so the church becomes this repository of saving grace, just as with the Bible we were talking about, in a sense, the Bible is the product of the church. The church is God's community. And so it's the community through which he saves the world.

And so God, through Christ and through the Vicar of Christ, the pope and the sacraments, it is that means by which God distributes saving grace into the world, which does bring us to the mass, but of course you have baptism as that which cancels original sin and therefore is the beginning of membership into that covenant community, and then on from there the mass being the one we typically focus on as that eating of the flesh and blood of our Savior as an ongoing physical, spiritual transmission of saving grace into our lives as we are then justified or made righteous step by step in kind of a synergistic way before God. So a human effort together with God's grace working in us.

**Darrel Bock**

So transubstantiation. Let's get to the technical terminology here. Transubstantiation is the idea that the elements during the mass become the body and blood of Christ. So you partake, if I can say it again, again of that which Christ has supplied, taking John 6 in a very, very literal kind of way, in an ongoing kind of way, and so that actually is the theology through which this ongoing grace is communicated, right, in the –

**Michael Svigel**

Yes.
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Scott Horrell  Right.

Darrel Bock  – mysterious and miraculous transference of this presence of Christ into the elements which you then partake and that sustains you.

Michael Svigel  Right. So the – at the moment that the priest says, "This is my body," the invisible, unperceivable essence that you can't – you couldn't see it even in an electron microscope, but it's there in a miracle, it contains then the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. And that becomes then the means, the fuel, or the nourishing – spiritual and physical nourishment. As you partake of it, it becomes part of you and transforms you and makes you more and more righteous.

So – and that's an essential part of their – that's why it's – in fact, the – you have Protestants in the Reformation complaining about the idolatry of the mass because, if it's true that that Eucharist is the actual body, blood, soul and divinity of the God-man Jesus, it was a logical step to worship that and venerate that as God, but if the theology's not right, then the Protestants were right that this is idolatry, so that's the controversy.

Darrel Bock  Now, in contrast to that, we have the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, which says that – and I'm not a theologian, so –

Scott Horrell  Yeah, we know.

Darrel Bock  But which says that – I like to call it "the over, under, around and through" view, that Jesus Christ surrounds the elements, that he's spiritually present, but he's not in the elements themselves. The elements don't become –

Michael Svigel  Right. That's the key.

Darrel Bock  – That's right, don't become and body and –

Michael Svigel  It's not transforming into.

Darrel Bock  – right, body and blood of Christ.

Michael Svigel  He's in, with and under.
Darrel Bock: He's everywhere. He's everywhere but in the elements.

Michael Svigel: Luther uses the example of if you take a hot rod of iron and put it in the fire and it turns red and takes on characteristics of fire, but the iron itself is not actually changed into fire. So that's kind of the idea of consubstantiation.

Darrel Bock: Okay, and then obviously a third view that you have that Luther and Zwingli got into is the memorial view that you're simply commemorating the death of Christ and that there's nothing happening with the elements or –

Michael Svigel: Under or through, yeah.

Darrel Bock: – around the elements or whatever, and of course the famous Marburg controversy that would – that prevented the Swiss and German reformations from coming together where the legend is that Luther carved into the wood when his discussion with Zwingli, “This is my body,” and basically said, "Until you can tell me what the meaning of is is, then this doesn't mean what it says and we've got a problem." It was the only problem out of 15, supposedly, that they could not solve and come to agreement on.

So this has not been an insignificant conversation in the history of the church. This has been a major issue because of where it comes from, where it starts off with. It starts off with this transubstantiation idea and the elements becoming the body and blood of Christ.

Scott Horrell: There's even a little distinction between the Calvinist sacramentalist view and the memorial, the Zwingli view, or at least what today would typically be a usual Baptist or other view, that is this is simple a memorial. It is a symbol of what our Lord has done. There is not necessarily any spiritual presence in that. It has to do with my faith, even though we may be judged if we partake it unworthily. But the sacramentalist view yet can apply to a Presbyterian or other perspective where there is literally the spiritual presence of the Lord there at the taking of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, the judgment is –

Darrel Bock: So it's not the elements, per se, but it's the meal as a whole and the feel of the meal as a whole.
Scott Horrell: And Christ is – right. And Calvin would describe it as the Holy Spirit is binding together the gathered community in Christ as if he were present by mediation of the Spirit. He's the host of the meal –

Darrel Bock: Yeah, I've heard –

Scott Horrell – as if you were sitting at the table with Christ at the Last Table.

Darrel Bock: I've heard Presbyterians describe it as a kind of covenant renewal, in which you're reaffirming your commitment to the covenant, and there's very much a – there's very much a spiritual affirmation that's going on with the sense that Christ is present that the feeling is if you leave it as a memorial, that's almost too detached, and you're not saying enough about the specialness of what the meal is.

Okay, well, we've worked our way through that. Let's talk – come back to justification because I think this is important. The idea that justification is something, if I can say, is something that happens to a degree in a moment that makes you saved, if I can – I'm going to put it in real crass and perhaps oversimplified terms – as opposed to the idea of justification also being this ongoing process that never ends until you get to glorification. Is that another difference that we're talking about here?

Michael Svigel Yeah, the – generally, Protestants speak in terms of a declaration of righteousness. Justification is that moment that you are now saved.

Darrel Bock God says you are righteous because of what Christ has done?

Michael Svigel You've been declared righteous –

Darrel Bock And that's done.

Michael Svigel – even though you aren't actually doing righteous things. It's not – so you're declared righteous and then sanctification – and this is one of the geniuses of Protestantism – justification becomes the one even that you enter into salvation. Then we have a new term, "sanctification," that is the process, the progressively being made more and more righteous and conforming to that.
Darrel Bock  So it's recognizing something very similar that the Catholics also recognize.

Michael Svigel  Exactly.

Darrel Bock  But it's defining it and framing it in a completely different timeframe.

Michael Svigel  Yeah. And the sanctification doesn't – isn't the thing that saves you; it is a result of the saving, the condition of being saved, a result of the justification.

Darrel Bock  So there's a sense for a Protestant in which salvation is very much “already not yet,” if I can say it that way.

Michael Svigel  Yeah.

Darrel Bock  You've already saved. You've been justified. You've been declared righteous, but now there's the working out of what that means in the – and the effects of the giftedness that you have received as a result of being saved, the spirit and the work and the spirit ____.

Michael Svigel  And Protestants even believe in means of sanctification. There are things that you do gathering in the community, worship, reading scripture, prayer, that contribute to that. So we're not that different from –

Darrel Bock  But that doesn't get you saved.

Michael Svigel  Exactly.

Darrel Bock  It maintains.

Michael Svigel  It maintains, and it produces spiritual growth, yes.

Darrel Bock  Health of your – it maintains the health of your being saved.

Michael Svigel  Yes.
Scott Horrell: The idea is there's an imputation of our sin to Christ and his righteousness imputed at the moment of saving faith to us. It doesn't deny because there's the word group that Darrel knows all about the dikaios and dikaiosune. We still area to be growing in righteousness. It's kind of the same word, justification or righteousness. We're to be growing in that through our life. So it is a once imputed righteousness of Christ to us at the moment of saving faith. But that does work out through our life. We call it sanctification typically in our evangelical circles. But the word's very similar in, of course, the Greek New Testament.

Michael Svigel: These are theological terms. You can't find – you heard the New Testament. Sanctification doesn't always mean the process of spiritual growth as we use it. We use these terms so we can distinguish between that which happened once in the past, our initial salvation and then that which is continuing on progressively.

Scott Horrell: But what the Roman Catholic rejects is that there is an imputed righteousness of Christ to us at the moment of salvation, that we are counted as fully righteous in the sight of God.

Darrel Bock: Right. You know it's interesting because in the new perspective discussion—and this introduces a whole other dimension of this—that it's come on in which Protestants have been debating exactly what justification means against its Jewish background. The whole teaching of imputation has also come up for conversation, again, from within a Protestant background. And the emphasis is you don't see that many passages that really are clearly teaching an imputation. I mean most people will acknowledge that the 2 Corinthians 5:20 is probably the clearest imputation passage we have in the New Testament.

But beyond that, how many other passages actually explicitly talk about imputation? We can talk about substitution. We can talk about representation. But imputation that Christ's righteousness is completely imputed and put in my place, it's more than a declaration of righteousness that Christ has achieved for me, is something that's also being discussed among Protestants today. But that's a whole other podcast, and that's with a whole other panel.
Let's deal with the priesthood of believers quickly, because I think we've pretty much set the table by much of what we've said. One of the standouts, I remember I was taught – I majored in European history and really concentrated on Reformation and – Renaissance and Reformation up to the Enlightenment in that time, and I had a student of one of the most famous reformation historians operating in the humanities, a guy named Louis Spitz. His – I had one of his students at the University of Texas.

And I remember two things being emphasized in his presentation of the Reformation. He would emphasize the Sola Scriptura debate and the role of scripture vis-à-vis tradition. And then the other thing that he would emphasize in presenting this was the priesthood of the believers, that the idea that there is a priesthood of believers that's important; in fact, let me segue back to the mass to talk about this: I think there was a time – I think I remember this correctly – in which during the mass a layperson would only get one of the elements.

Scott Horrell: Oh, yes.

*Darrel Bock*  

And so to suggest – and if you think back and you think about this, you will – you'll understand what's going on, that the symbolism is very thought through. So the layperson only gets one of the elements. The priest takes the –

Scott Horrell: The priest gets both, yeah.

*Darrel Bock*  

– both, and as a representative –

Scott Horrell: On behalf, yes.

*Darrel Bock*  

– on behalf of the laity who are attending the service.

Scott Horrell: That was a huge issue, even before Luther. It was John Hus was a big advocate of having the Eucharist in both kinds. It was a huge issue.
Darrel Bock: And so that's very, very important. And if you just think about that and the symbolism of what that represents, then we move very easily to why the priesthood of the believers is a big deal, because now everyone is equally – has equal access to God. There is no other mediator between God and man other than Jesus Christ. There's no church coming alongside. There's no priest coming alongside. What we get is the priesthood of all believers in which everyone has access to the same level of grace and has the same status before God.

Michael Svigel: Yeah, there's actually two aspects to that in the Reformation theology. One is that we don't need a mediator other than Christ, and we come by simple faith to him. It's not the mediation of the church, as you described. The other aspect that was really emphasized by the reformers as well was believers are each other's priests, that we are praying for one another. All of the one another's in the New Testament takes on a whole new life in the Protestant church so that –

Darrel Bock: So the emphasis on a community –

Michael Svigel: Community as well, so there's the individual "I don't need someone to…" that's true, because it's my own faith. People can't have faith for me and this kind of thing. But then there's also the priesthood of believers –

Scott Horrell: Horizontal, yeah.

Michael Svigel: – the horizontal, and these are two things that have – I think sometimes as you go forward from the Reformation, the individual part is emphasized and you forget that we are each other's priests to hold each other accountable, confess our sins to one another. And so what's interesting is, that which was reserved just for the magisterium, the ability to bind and loose to forgive and withhold forgiveness through the sacraments and through penance and such, that was just the role of the priest; now in – from Luther on, was we have the ability to confess our sins to one another, pronounce forgiveness as the scripture says. So the whole – the binding and the loosing and the forgiving and the holding accountable and exhorting to love and good works becomes – we all have a set of keys now. We are –
Darrel Bock: So rather than having a structure that goes like this [gestures vertically], you have a structure that goes like that [gestures horizontally].

Michael Svigel: Exactly, yeah.

Darrel Bock: And it flattens everything out. And it's a significant difference.

Michael Svigel: Yeah, it goes back to, even the Old Testament. Let's face it: as the church grew and saw itself more and more as the new Israel, then the hierarchical paradigm that we see in the Old Testament, or the high priest and then the Levitical priest, the Aaronic priesthood, the Levitical priesthood, you see all of that being adopted, assumed, including the vestments and everything else, the military. You had a very centralized kingdom in the Old Testament. But with the New Testament that seems to be inverted as suddenly the world is our parish, go into all the world, preach the gospel. There's no long a Jerusalem to which we call the nations to worship; rather, we're set out where two or three are gathered, there I am, where now not only priests, but sons and daughters of the living God.

There's a lot of things that shift between Old and New Testament, and yet as time went on and the church saw itself, Augustine, City of God and so forth, as the new Israel, the paradigm of the Old Testament was assumed by the church. And so we came back to this hierarchy of priests and all the rest.

Darrel Bock: The other thing that's going on here, and I haven't used this metaphor yet, but I was planning to is that the Roman Catholic Church is very much a sponge in the way it absorbs what's going on culturally around it and the way it adapts it. And there are two scenes in my mind that show this. And so when you appeal to the background of the Old Testament, the other background that's also very much in play is this idea of the church being a kingdom, and the model of what we get out of the Roman Empire being the substitute and the replacement for the Roman Empire. So we get a title for the pope that actually matches the title that you gave to emperor.

Michael Svigel: Oh, yeah, and the jurisdictions for diocese just followed the standard political boundaries.
Darrel Bock: And so it's a political structure as well –

Michael Svigel: Yeah, the hierarchies. Yeah.

Darrel Bock: – that has nothing to do, or not that much to do or as much to do with the Old Testament as the social political model that you had coming out of the Roman Empire and the associations of it being the replacement in some ways from – and what I mean by a sponge is it culturally absorbs what's around it so that, for example, when you go to Guatemala and you go to certain places, you see this syncretism between Pagan worship and practice, which the Catholic Church has absorbed, like a sponge, resignified in terms of its meaning –

Michael Svigel: Baptized it.

Darrel Bock: – and sanctified it so that the move that a person comes coming out of Paganism to Roman Catholic Church if they come out of local religions into the Roman Catholic Church is not that great for them to make, and they have all these things that go alongside. And the thing that struck me living in Europe, this is a part of living in Europe, and you go to the Catholic sections of Europe, and you see things and practices that you associate, if you know European history at all, that you associate with things that happened in the political structures that now have shown up in the Catholic Church.

You see – and the veneration of the saints, for example, and the way in which that operates and other practices, this sponge where you take things that were done in a Pagan polytheistic context and now have been Christianized and sanctified, if I can say it that way, and are now applied and given new meaning so that it becomes safe, but it's usable, and the distance a person has to move in order to move from wherever they've been into Roman Catholicism is not as great and as radical as if you say, "Oh, polytheism…" you don't do any of that. You cut – that's all cut off.
That's – there's nowhere to go there. It's one of the sociological phenomenon, and one of the things that I hope people are getting as we're talking our way through this, is to see how sociologically structured Roman Catholicism is to deal with people moving out of one religious environment into another and making the Catholic Church kind of an acceptable and easy place structurally to land, if I can say it that way.

And that's entitled – Pagan religions or primitive religions are considered, officially, divine forms of pre-evangelism to lead people into the church.

Well, again, you can see how they've structured their – they've structured the way they look at things to make these moves more gradual and in some ways less radical than, generally speaking, you hear in a Protestant context.

Well, that – I'm going to use that transition to the last topic that we're going to talk about and that's the Cult of the Saints, which leads into the Mariology. Probably if you were to ask two people what makes Catholicism different from Protestantism on the street, I think the two answers that you would get, I would say, would be two – just think of two people, okay? Think of the pope and think of Mary, okay? And those would be the two differences that you'd immediately sense. So we're going to kind of end where we began by coming to this second person who is so dominant in Catholicism.

Let's start off first by probably asking this question: why is Mary so important to Catholicism, and why has she not had, relatively speaking, the same level of importance in Protestant circles?

I can answer the second part first. The reason why Protestants don't have a high place for Mary is because the Roman Catholics did.

And so part of it is reactive.
When you look at the history of the church, though there wasn't prayers to or veneration of Mary early on, there was still a high regard for her. She was viewed as the second Eve who undid what – where Eve messed up. She was viewed the Theotokos, the Mother of God, which originally was not a confession of who Mary was, but a confession of who Jesus was. And the idea was, if Jesus is truly the God man, he was a God man at conception, at birth, at death, through the whole thing. So confessing Mary as the giver – the one who gave birth to God was a confession of who Jesus was.

That's the Council of Ephesus 431.

Council – 431, Council of Ephesus.

Yes.

So that was a – however, you have language Theotokos, Mother of God or God Bearer, in popular piety as they hear that, really the veneration of Mary and the saints is, by most historians' accounts, it starts at the popular level, and it just kind of eventually works its way into liturgies and into prayers.

It's a sponge.

It is a sponge. And then eventually, and surprisingly late in the history of the church, the ever-virginity of Mary, the immaculate conception, many people don't understand immaculate conception is not – the virgin birth is not about Jesus. It's Mary herself is born without – or is conceived without sin so that she can be the holy vessel of Jesus. And these things, you can see where they start to come in prayers and liturgies, and then eventually go to doctrine, and they're debated, usually in the Medieval Period. Some are for it; some against it. Big names too. I'm not talking about just – I'm talking about people like St. Bernard and Anselm and these taking different sides on it, and then a century or so later, eventually by papal and magisterial authority, become dogma. So it has a long and storied history.

So when it comes to the doctrines associated with Mary, just to show how light the official dogmatic stamp is, Immaculate Conception 1854, Assumption of Mary 1950. So I mean we're – you're in the very recent times in the big scheme of things.
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Michael Svigel  Which doesn't mean people started believing them then. They believed them for centuries. That's when it becomes, "Oh, now you must believe this as a Christian."

Darrel Bock  That's right. This becomes an official –

Michael Svigel  Official doctrine.

Darrel Bock  – of the church. Now – so the cult of the saints and Mary, I have always seen – and I – the Eastern Orthodox has this too, so it's not just the Roman Catholic Church – I tend to see it as a move towards being sensitive to the polytheistic background that a lot of people came out of. And the reverence of the saints isn't a way of making other gods, but it is a way of acknowledging the greatness of the saints and give people many models and symbols to attach themselves to in their religious devotions.

Scott Horrell  Heroes. It was a –

Darrel Bock  Yeah, heroes.

Scott Horrell  It's a thin veneer in Latin America, for example, that the saints really can often be seen as the gods of indigenous African religions and so forth, or Indian religions behind them. I think, having been in Latin America, this – we have traditionally emphasized the deity of Christ. And so as we think of the medieval church and all the rest, how does a person then relate to God? Well, Jesus was tempted, but he's God; of course he's not going to sin. And so Chalcedon was warped. That language, Mother of God, which we all affirm understood rightly, came to mean that Jesus is completely God. He's not going to fail. So he – but Mary, she's truly human and full of grace.

Darrel Bock  So we can't relate to Jesus as the model. We can't be like Jesus is the model, because in our minds we say, "Oh, he's just different."

Scott Horrell  That's right.

Darrel Bock  And – but we can relate to anybody else as a model and example. And so we just stack up these models and examples.
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Scott Horrell Especially Mary, yeah.

Darrel Bock Yeah.

Michael Svigel Yeah. I would also say that, with the cult of the saints – and by "cult" we aren't trying to be derogatory. It's the –

Darrel Bock Veneration of the saints.

Michael Svigel – the veneration of – and so with the veneration of the saints and intercession of the saints, they will – officially they'll say, "We aren't praying to or worshipping the saints. We are praying through them," as I might say, "Darrell, could you pray for me? I'm going through something hard." You would say, "Sure, I'll be praying for you," and you intercede for me. Well, the idea is, they're still alive, and they're even more glorious than they were in this life.

Scott Horrell They're part of the cloud of witnesses,

Michael Svigel And they're part of the cloud of witnesses. It's one church of departed and living. And so therefore they're going to continue to intercede for us and pray for us, and it makes sense that we should be able to ask for their prayers as well. So that's the logic. Now there is – very briefly, there is an eschatology attached to this and this realized eschatology that says the saints are currently experiencing this growth in glory whereas in the earlier church, there was a sense that that didn't happen until resurrection. You had to wait for this.

Scott Horrell: Coming back to Mary just a little bit –

Michael Svigel Sure.
Scott Horrell: – as the Mother of God, the perpetual virgin, ever virgin, immaculately conceives. So her – as you've said, Mike, her conception was without sin, and her ascension into heaven and her role as co-redemptrix, as the one who, because of her purity, was partner in, even allowed the incarnation. She was there through Jesus', of course, birth, childhood, his ministries at many points, at the cross, at the Resurrection. She was there in the upper room in Acts 1 praying. For a good reason, far more candles are burning to Mary than to anyone else in the Catholic Church. She is the mother of our Lord, and therefore she is the mother of his body, and his body is the church, so she is the mother of the church. He is the creator of all things. So she is the mother of angels. She is the mother of humanity, as is sometimes said.

Michael Svigel Queen of heaven, yeah.

Scott Horrell The queen of heaven, and perhaps –

Darrel Bock That's why she sits at the top at many churches, Roman Catholic Churches.

Scott Horrell She does, indeed.

Darrel Bock Yeah.

Scott Horrell And of course with John Paul II, who was a Marian pope, there was a petition with at least 7 million names on it wanting him to make as dogma Mary as co-redemptrix, to actually use that terminology, because it's with her cooperation that redemption is offered to the human race. That, by the grace of Christ and God himself, of course.

Darrel Bock So that's how it's seen. Obviously very, very different in Protestantism. Protestants, generally speaking, don't do this. Like I say, the Greek Orthodox do have an element of this, but Protestants generally do not. And it's back to this, if we can say, Sola Scriptura, Sola Christi, okay, Sola Fide, a emphasis that is a part of Protestantism that we have these very focused Christologically, how do I say it, laser-like way that we deal with salvation so that we only have scripture. We only have Christ. It's only by faith. Those are some of the emphases that you see Protestants making. And we don't see this development.
Now there are a couple of things that we haven't talked about that I'm not going to take the time, but I'm going to mention it here because they are part of the conversation. Obviously, we have a different look of scripture itself when we think of the Old Testament, when we think about Catholics versus Protestants. We haven't mentioned that, but you have the – what are known, what will sometimes be called "the Apocryphal books" or sometimes called the Deuterocanonicals, these books – mostly these Jewish works that first Maccabees, second Maccabees Sirach 14 books total that make up a difference, which allow room for some other teachings to come in, things like Purgatory, which we haven't talked about. That's another difference that Catholics and Protestants generally have, and the support for those kinds of doctrines you don't see in the traditional Hebrew Old Testament, but you do see it in some of these Apocryphal texts.

So we've got some other things that are also – if we were to make a more comprehensive list and be really obsessive about it, we could keep going for another hour and add some more things. But I think we've talked about the big ones. We've talked about the role of scripture in relationship to tradition and how that produces a completely different model. We've talked about how the Roman Catholic Church sees the church as, in some sense, a mediator or a blessing in the continuing of grace because they have a different view of the way justification works. We've seen the role in which the church has as this kind of sponge to help people adapt from whatever non-Christian background they come out of into the church and make that walk across that bridge less radical than perhaps it is in the Protestant tradition, that kind of thing, and we've seen the – very effectively, I think, a sociological structure that has some very simple categories to work with. There's one pope. There's one church. There's one dogma. And even though the Catholic Church is big and there are lots of conversations happening within it, there is a very clear place where the buck stops in the Catholic Church that you tend not to see as clearly in Protestant circles, with Protestants being much more open-ended in terms of the way those things operate sociologically.
So I want to thank you for taking the time to come and discuss the Catholic Church and – the Roman Catholic Church and the difference between them and Protestants with us, and we hope this has been beneficial to you, the listener, as you think through why do we have these differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. We've tried to be descriptive here, mostly, and hopefully it's been helpful to you. And we hope that you will come back and sit at the table with us in the future. Thank you very much. Thanks.