

# Are We Together? A Protestant Analysis of Roman Catholicism

When it comes to Christianity, there are various branches and denominations that differ in their beliefs and practices. One of the most distinct and globally influential branches is Roman Catholicism. With over a billion followers worldwide, Roman Catholicism has a rich history and a unique set of traditions that sets it apart from other Christian denominations. In this article, we will delve into the key aspects of Roman Catholicism and analyze it from a Protestant perspective.

## A Brief Overview of Roman Catholicism

Before we begin our analysis, let's provide a brief to the core beliefs and practices of Roman Catholicism. Catholics believe in the Holy Trinity - the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. They also hold the Bible as a sacred text but give equal importance to the teachings of the Church's tradition and the authority of the Pope.

Sacraments play a vital role in Catholicism, with seven sacraments observed: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony. The Eucharist, also known as the Mass, is a central act of worship during which Catholics believe bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.

### **Are We Together?: A Protestant Analyzes Roman Catholicism** by R.C. Sproul (Kindle Edition)

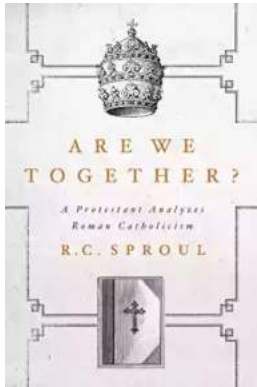
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## **Biblical Interpretation**

One of the fundamental differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism lies in their approach to biblical interpretation. Protestants emphasize personal interpretation and direct engagement with Scripture, believing in the authority and sufficiency of the Bible alone. They believe that every individual has the right to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, guided by the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, Roman Catholicism places considerable emphasis on the interpretation of the Bible by the Church and the Pope. Catholics believe that the Church, through Apostolic Tradition, has the authority to interpret Scripture correctly and guide believers in matters of faith and practice.

## **Papal Infallibility**

Another significant aspect of Roman Catholicism is the doctrine of papal infallibility. This doctrine asserts that the Pope, when speaking *ex cathedra* on matters of faith and morals, is incapable of making errors or teaching falsehoods. It is believed that the Pope receives special guidance from the Holy Spirit, ensuring the preservation of the Church's teachings.

For Protestants, this doctrine raises questions about the potential fallibility of human leaders and the idea that the Pope's pronouncements hold supreme authority. Protestants maintain that ultimate authority and infallibility rest solely with the Bible and God Himself, rather than any human institution or figure.

## **Saints and Mary**

Roman Catholicism places great importance on saints, considering them holy individuals who have achieved a higher level of sanctification and can intercede on behalf of the faithful. Catholics often pray to saints, seeking their assistance and help in various aspects of life. Additionally, the veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is deeply ingrained within Catholic tradition.

Protestants, however, believe in the direct access to God through Christ alone, considering Jesus as the sole mediator between God and humanity. They do not pray to saints or seek their intercession, as they believe in the personal relationship with God through individual repentance and faith.

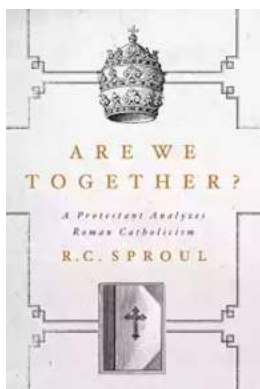
## **Salvation and Justification**

Salvation and justification are crucial aspects of Christian theology. Roman Catholicism teaches that salvation is a cooperative process between God's grace and human participation. Catholics believe in the necessity of good works and adherence to the sacraments for salvation.

Protestantism, on the other hand, emphasizes the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Protestants believe that salvation is a free gift from God, granted solely through faith in Jesus Christ, and is not earned by good works or sacraments. This difference in understanding salvation has been a point of contention between the two branches of Christianity.

While Roman Catholicism and Protestantism share a common Christian heritage, they diverge on various theological, interpretive, and doctrinal points. This analysis sheds light on some of the key differences between the two branches, presenting a Protestant perspective on Roman Catholic beliefs and practices.

Understanding these differences fosters dialogue, mutual respect, and the opportunity to learn from one another. By appreciating the diverse perspectives within Christianity, we can work towards a more united faith in Christ, fostering love and understanding that transcends denominational boundaries.



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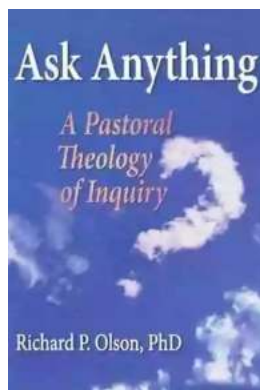
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In recent years, some evangelical Protestant leaders have signed statements pledging themselves to joint social action with Roman Catholics. Others have refused to participate, declaring that, in their view, the statements went too far, touching on the gospel, which remains a point of disagreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Many evangelical Christians have found themselves confused by the different directions taken by their leaders.

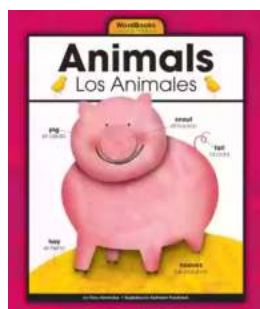
In *Are We Together? A Protestant Analyzes Roman Catholicism*, R.C. Sproul takes his stand for the cardinal doctrines of Protestantism in opposition to the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. Sproul, a passionate defender of the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, cites the historic statements of the Protestant Reformers and the Roman Catholic authorities, then references modern doctrinal statements to show that the Roman Catholic Church has not altered its official positions. In light of this continuing gap, he writes, efforts by some in the evangelical camp to find common ground with Rome on matters at the heart of the gospel are nothing short of untrue to biblical teaching. In Sproul's estimation, the Reformation remains relevant.

*Are We Together?* is a clarion call to evangelicals to stand firm for the gospel, the precious good news of salvation as it is set forth in Scripture alone.



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