

A puzzle: is Rome now “softer” than before?

Vatican II = Second Vatican Council 1962-1965

- Vatican II appeared different...
- no change in doctrine (obviously)
- key principle = “absorption” or “embrace” = Catholicism is the umbrella that absorbs non-Catholics, non-Christians, charismatics... and evangelicals

Leonardo di Chirico: “The Roman Church... does not really change in its fundamental commitments. It adds new layers, it adds new colors, it reshapes them in terms of attitude and tone, but the core, the heart of what Rome stands for is never -- has never – changed. It expands itself, but does not purify itself. It embraces new trends and practices, but does not expel unbiblical ones.”

** often uses same words... but with different meaning **

3. How do we relate?

Resources from Ligonier

From Ligonier:

- Tabletalk: Rome, the East, and the Ancient Tradition of the Church (Dec 2025)
- [Roman Catholicism | Resources from Ligonier Ministries](#)

Understanding Roman Catholicism

1. Authority in the Roman church

*** What is the supreme authority for the church? ***

For Rome:

- Scripture and tradition are of equal authority
AND
- both Scripture and tradition are interpreted authoritatively by the magisterium
THEREFORE
- supreme authority is given to the church and the pope

Roman ideas that contradict Scripture...

- cult of Mary and the saints, papal authority and infallibility, penance, indulgences, transubstantiation, priestcraft, purgatory etc...

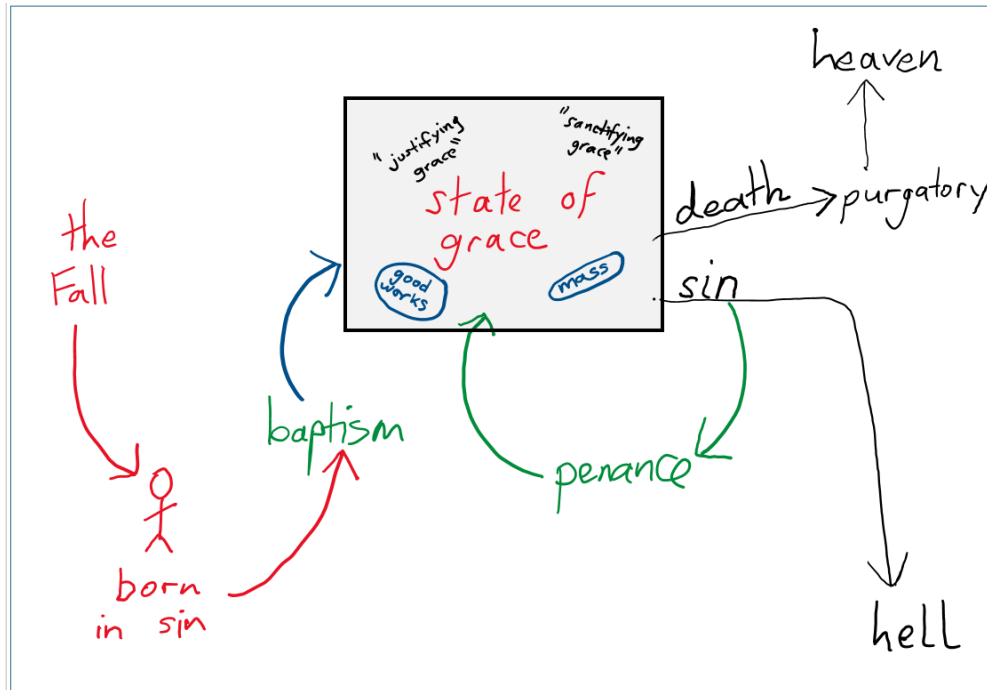
... hence claim of supreme authority, e.g. to develop new truth

- Council of Trent, 1545
- Newman: acorn → oak tree

vs. Reformed approach to tradition

- don't reject it...
- subordinate to Scripture (e.g. WCF 1.10, 31.4)
- Jesus' warning against those who make Scripture subject to man's authority, Mark 7:7-9

2. The Roman scheme of salvation



Sin and fall:

*** The problem determines the solution ***

- Human nature is wounded, not corrupted semi-Pelagian

Baptism → infused righteousness, state of grace

Remain in state of grace through:

- Good works
- The church's sacramental system

Sin → fall from grace → restored by penance

Hell... / or purgatory ^{plus indulgences} → heaven

the Mass:

- re-sacrifice of Christ on the altar – transubstantiation
- always provides grace

Why is this so wrong?

Sin – bound in sin, total depravity and total inability

RC “justification”

- is mix of God's initiative and man's efforts synergism
- is a journey never completed
- exalts the church and priest as channels of grace

Biblical justification

- a legal declaration... alien to us (outside, not internal – different to sanctification)
- brought irretrievably into the grace of God, in which we now stand (Rom. 5:1-2)... because we are united with Christ.

Experience:

- RC: justification goes up and down, assurance is impossible and condemned
- Bible: imputed righteousness means security is in Christ, and assurance is possible.

Sacraments: means of grace... but not magical rites