

## Theology 1.4 - Trinity

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### Catholicism Continued:

#### 1. Catholicism as a 'System of Faith'

- a. It is a sacramental process based on "Dogma." Dogmatics is that branch of theology which attempts to express the beliefs [faith] and doctrines [dogmas] of the Church. Defide' = definite is the highest level of dogma – these are the 'must believes of Catholicism [deal breakers].
- b. Dogma falls into 2 general categories:
  - i. That which is revealed in scripture and taught by the church.
  - ii. That which is taught by the church but not found in scripture.
- c. There are specific areas of dogma:
  - i. Mary – is of vital importance, but is not a "co-redemptrix." Beliefs taught about Mary include:
    1. Conceived without original sin – her birth was miraculous in its own.
      - a. There are practical problems in dealing with Jesus' being born Supernaturally without a sin-nature and thus sinless. One approach is to hold that Mary was supernaturally born without a sin-nature, thus Jesus could not inherit that human curse from her.
      - b. Another approach is to hold that sin is inherited paternally – and since Jesus had no earthly father He was born without a sin-nature.
    2. Remained a virgin for life after the birth of Jesus.
      - a. Hence, Jesus had no actual brothers or sisters, just 'close relatives' in a small community.
      - b. There is no direct evidence that this occurred, but it does fly in the face of cultural expectations.
    3. At her death, she was bodily assumed into heaven similar to Elijah, and did not undergo decay.
  - ii. Church – hierarchy and constitution
    1. Apostolic authority began with Peter as head, and would be continued throughout its history as the Pope – the Bishop of Rome.
    2. Pope is believed to be infallible when he speaks 'ex cathedre' – last time was in the 1950's. The Pope is held as the mouthpiece of God.
    3. Membership in the 'Holy Catholic Church' is necessary for salvation.
      - a. Those who profess faith who do not acknowledge the primacy of Pope and Church are not true believers, and thus not saved.
      - b. Orthodox Greek Catholics are not true believers, nor are Lutherans, Protestants, etc.

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- c. Necessity of church membership makes excommunication a big deal.
      - d. The church and church leadership hold a considerable amount of authority and control over their congregations and society because of their spiritual authority.
  - iii. Saints – veneration of acknowledge saints is permissible and profitable:
    - 1. Veneration of ‘relics’ – bones of saints or objects closely associated with them. Most church altars contained a relic that made the altar holy.
    - 2. The early church was known for remarkable healings and mystical experiences, of church leaders. These signs brought many conversions in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Such miraculous events were instituted as a demonstration and ultimately a requirement for ‘sainthood.’
    - 3. Statues & images of saints as visual objects to focus prayer was deemed advantageous. Statues and Icons became a focal point, and not objects of worship – thus they didn’t run afoul of the 10 Commandment prohibition against “graven images.”
    - 4. It is believed that these saints in heaven will intercede on our behalf as a result of our prayers, as an extension of Jesus and the Spirit interceding for us.
    - 5. Praying for the dead was also encouraged with the belief that saints could intercede and reduce the time a believer would otherwise have spent in purgatory before taken into heaven.
  - iv. Sacraments – all sacraments impart grace to practitioners.
    - 1. The value of the sacrament is objective:
      - a. The sacrament is the vehicle by which grace is conferred.
      - b. The value is not in the symbolism or the believer’s response, but in the rite/ritual itself.
      - c. Proper execution of the ritual is thus extremely important and thus a major focus of training for priests.
    - 2. Rituals include baptism, confirmation, and holy-orders [ordination of priests or nuns], extreme unction [last rites], Eucharist, penance, and weddings.
    - 3. All sacraments are necessary [not merely profitable] for salvation.
    - 4. Confession of faith is less important than the sacrament itself.
    - 5. Baptism is necessary for the start of the salvific process.
      - a. Credo-baptism – the individual has to be able to articulate their faith [adult baptism].
      - b. Pado-baptism – no articulation is necessary, the rite confers cleansing of sin [infant baptism].
      - c. Baptism washes away inherited sin in the infant, and all previous sin committed by an adult.

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6. Forgiveness and atonement are the important functions derived from the sacraments. Catholicism is a 'pay as you go' system of applied grace.
  - a. Baptism starts the process in the church community.
  - b. Confirmation – is a continuation of baptism where the individual is prepared to understand and articulate faith and dogma.
  - c. Penance is an ongoing process of identifying and renouncing wrong doing – again focusing of the actions and not the interior state of the believer [doing rather than being].
  - d. 'Last rite' is a continuation of penance.
  - e. Matrimony is a continuation of the church, with the proviso that wedding partners will raise children within the church.
  - f. Holy orders bring forgiveness even against mortal sin. Priests and Nuns are afforded an elevated position in the spiritual hierarchy, and are often thought of as incapable of wrong doing.
  - g. Eucharist is an important rite of continuing spiritual nourishment to sustain salvation.
  - h. Water baptism will eradicate original-mortal-venal sin.
7. Penance is necessary for the continuance of salvation – and it is affective only up to the point the rite is completed. Immediately after the rite, you are held responsible for your sins.
  - a. Mortal sins – are those that are mostly considered felony sins. These are deliberate acts against the Biblical standard of law – murder, suicide, theft, etc.
    - i. Abortion
    - ii. Anger
    - iii. Adultery
    - iv. Adding words to the Bible
    - v. Greed
    - vi. Drunkenness
    - vii. Envy
    - viii. Jealousy
    - ix. Theft
    - x. Lying – false testimony
    - xi. Murder
    - xii. Idolatry
    - xiii. Blasphemy
  - b. Venal sins – are those that are considered misdemeanors – these are the unintentional typical things that occur in

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our thought life or in everyday actions and are expunged by penance.

- i. Fantasy
- ii. Unintentional harm
- iii. Unintentional offense

c. Absolution – is when your sins are confessed, a proper penance performed, and you are declared forgiven by the priest through the authority of the church.

- i. Priest has a responsibility to impose a penance commensurate with the severity of the infraction.
- ii. Once the penance is performed, the sin is expunged and forgotten... until the next offense.

d. There is no 'unworthy recipient' of sacraments – as the condition of value is in the rite itself, not the faith or the response of the individual.

8. Confirmation is the filling of the Holy Spirit after Biblical study with the laying on of hands of a priest. It is the entering into the church community as an adult reminiscent of the Bar-Mitzvah or Bat-Mitzvah in Judaism.

9. Eucharist – “Trans-Substantiation” of the elements

- a. The belief that the elements are literally transformed into the actual body and blood of our Savior.
- b. This is a necessary spiritual nourishment that maintains the health of the Spirit within and ultimate salvation.

10. These rituals maintain the work of Jesus' atonement.

- a. The person who understands the system and does what is required to maintain their faith is a rarity... most professing Catholics don't know all or even most of these things or their implications.
- b. Ignorance could actually be a good thing – as one could hold to a simple faith without the added encumbrance of this “works-related” system. A simple confidence in Jesus is preferable.

v. Afterlife

1. Souls of the just in the moment of death who are free from guilt enter heaven.
2. Souls of the un-just that die in their mortal sin enter hell.
3. Souls of the just who are burdened with venial sin enter purgatory, where they must spend the proper time to atone for their sin before they can enter heaven. This is largely a misinterpretation of certain verses:
  - a. 1 Cor 3:12 – saved as through fire.
  - b. Mat 12:32 – forgiven in age to com.
  - c. Mat 5:25 – won't get out of prison until last cent is paid.

2. Reformed Theology – Scripture as the ‘Word of God’
  - a. The ‘Gospel’ is the basic plot line of God.
  - b. The Word of God – Scripture and the Logos [Jesus] are God’s Self-revelation to humanity. It is the story of divine love, to the undeserving sinner.
  - c. I am a follower of God because the Word of God lives in my mind and heart.
  - d. The Word is supremely powerful... As God spoke, inanimate things responded in immediate obedience – this was creation.
  - e. Genesis:
    - i. Satan’s work is to distort and confuse humanity’s understanding of the Word – as evidenced in the Garden.
    - ii. Free will is affirmed as the norm – Scripture presents that Satan had the right to disobey God and attempt to subvert God’s created order, and Adam and Eve could choose to disobey what God had instructed them.
    - iii. The Fall ensued because of the broken trust between man and God, disobedience was the result of broken trust.
    - iv. Casting out of the Garden is the spiritual alienation that ensued between humanity and God – and an angel was left on guard to prevent return until God’s preparations for atonement were complete. Grace abounds in both the promise of redemption and the prevention of the possibility that humanity could eat the fruit of the Tree of Life and live forever in their fallen state. It is not accidental that Jesus proclaims “I Am the Tree of Life.”
  - f. Prophets:
    - i. The prophets repeatedly asked the question ‘who do you trust?’
    - ii. Hezekiah in 701 BC was questioned by the Assyrian leader ‘on who do you rely, Pharaoh? Assyria has been made an agent of God.’ Faced with this crisis, Hezekiah tore his clothes and opened the school of Deuteronomy and bowed prostrate in the Temple, and asked ‘what do I do Lord?’ Good question! One we should each be asking regularly and often – Is 36:37
    - iii. Repeatedly those who relied on their own strength and understanding or upon the power of alliances with neighbors were frustrated. Those who relied upon God were vindicated – this is a major theme and message of scripture.
  - g. NT
    - i. Jesus was brought to this same crisis after His fast when His bodily strength was most weakened – Satan’s temptation was a personal crises of faith and purpose – and the “Living Word” employed the “written Word” to contest Satan... this is not by accident! This is the standard we should adopt.
    - ii. The question for us is – “do I trust God enough to live like this?”

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- iii. The real battle is not just to accurately interpret the Word, but do you really believe it? Do you completely trust Jesus? Not just here and now, but for all of eternity?
- iv. Satan's work is to break your trust with God.
- h. Timeline of the Word – significant spiritual events and responses:
  - i. 

<u>Creation</u>	<u>Trust or Fall</u>	<u>Abraham</u>	<u>Moses</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
ii. Response	Adam & Eve Mistrust	Trusts in Something Unseen	Word written down	Living Word revealed
  - iii. Abraham – there were 'good men' before Abraham, but his response to God's Word is both remarkable and the standard for faithfulness.
    - 1. Gen 14 – Abram as an untrained military leader beats the combined forces of local city-kings.
      - a. All the spoils including the people are now his booty.
      - b. The defeated king of Sodom begins negotiating with Abram that he can take the goods, but leave behind the people.
      - c. Abram offers 10% to the high priest of the Priest of the "Living God" Melchizedek, and leaves the rest behind.
    - 2. Gen 15 – the word of the Lord – faith that accepts God's Word not knowing how it will work out, but being fully convinced that God is capable of performing and will honor His promises.
  - iv. Moses – through whom law and worship ritual were established for God's chosen people, the elect who accepted God's covenant relationship on God's terms.
    - 1. Ritual is the focus of the law.
    - 2. Moral compassion is a minority position.
    - 3. Civil code and societal order is a minority position.
    - 4. Word of God expressed in the law is being set up as a foreshadow of the Lord Jesus who is to come.
  - v. Prophets – Ambassadors for the Kingdom of God to keep the kingdom of earth on track.
    - 1. Speak in the power of the Spirit – through Whom the Word of God comes to them.
    - 2. Society at that time was focused on wealth as the ultimate blessing demonstrating the righteousness of the wealthy. Prophets were typically outsiders chosen and empowered by God.
    - 3. God is setting the stage through the prophets for a major development in redemptive history:
      - a. Problem is the empty ritual of worship and sacraments devoid of loving God in grateful obedience.

- b. Compassion and mercy emerge as the pivotal things important to God – these are relational components born in hearts that know their own need and their proper relationship to God.
  - c. Tide is turning from Israel to the new people of God and the One who is to come. Israel's failure opens a new door of salvific history in the redemptive process.
  - vi. Jesus – the Word of God since before time, enters into time.
    - 1. Jesus described as the 'Word' is critically important – the Word was spoken at Creation, Jesus is that Word.
    - 2. Jesus re-lives the OT pattern of Israel.
      - a. Jesus cleansing the Temple is reminiscent of the role of the OT reforming kings.
      - b. Jesus is the new law-giver – Sermon on the Mount is built upon the prophets teaching.
      - c. Jesus ends sacrifice with His own death.
    - 3. Jesus refocuses the priority of living in conformance to the Word of God, not merely the accuracy of knowing it. This is the Gospel redemptive story in a nut-shell:
      - a. Temptation ends in trust.
      - b. Ritual ends in mercy and compassion.
      - c. Sin ends in grace.
      - d. Death ends in life.
      - e. The end restores the beginning.
    - 4. The Word and belief in the Word – do you trust God, even though you don't see it or completely understand it?
    - 5. Faith has components:
      - a. Intellectual – knowing Scripture and doctrine.
      - b. Spiritual – the material world is not my home, and life is more than what we see and touch.
      - c. Faith – the confidence to get me through this life and into the next.
      - d. Emotional – love, mercy, compassion, intimacy.
      - e. Manifested in action – good works to benefit others as an act of love.
      - f. Expressed in community – there is no such thing as a "lone wolf" Christian. We live and work in community; we are a fellowship of faith in action.
3. Holiness
- a. God is set apart:
    - i. He is the Holy Other.
    - ii. There is no other than He.

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- iii. God's people are also to be set apart – not in the smug indifference of the Jews, but in the example of a Holy Nation, a People after God's own heart – a witness to humanity.
- b. God is Relational
  - i. In the beginning God and man were in close relationship in the Garden.
    - 1. Adam walked with and lived in close proximity to God.
    - 2. Adam's fall – mistrust separated man from God. Satan sowed his seeds of rebellion and we chose to believe a lie... something we should have known better.
    - 3. An Angel was placed to maintain the separation of man and God, and to bar the way to the tree of life [if man ate of it he would be forced to live forever in this fallen state of separation].
  - ii. God remained Holy and True.
    - 1. Prophets who saw God fell down as though dead – fallen state cannot exist with God.
    - 2. Tabernacle and Temple sacrificial worship were established to bridge man's unholy nature and God's Holiness. Ultimately, Jesus was the Bridge through the Cross.
    - 3. Faith practitioner's failed to see things from God's perspective, although the problem was adequately revealed. They stubbornly persisted in ritual methodology rather than relational dependence.
    - 4. Isaiah saw himself in light of God's Holiness as a man of unclean lips living in a people of unclean lips – he was purified by the coal which cleansed his lips.
      - a. The creature in the presence of God will see themselves in their fallen state – and only God can remedy it.
      - b. God accepted Isaiah's assessment as true – God didn't judge him, his self-judgment was compelled by the Holiness of God.
      - c. This theme is carried through the NT.
- c. NT worship narratives
  - i. Disciples are allowed to see Jesus as who He really is – He is God – 'you are the Son of the Living God'.
  - ii. Jesus power over nature legitimizes His claim to deity – 'who is this who speaks to the wind and sea, and they obey Him?' The one who spoke the world into existence has ultimate power over it.
  - iii. Upper-room discourse is one of loving reassurance in the face of calamity – in Heaven there are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you... where you can be with me... another "comforter" is promised in the meantime. This is a wonderful demonstration of love... especially since Jesus knew what was going to happen to Himself in the next few days.
  - iv. Hebrews – teaches Jesus is interceding on our behalf.

- v. Ephesians –
  - 1. 'In Christ' statements testify to our new heritage.
  - 2. 3:14 prayer – that we become the fullness of God as we experience the love of God... this is not an angry God, but One who cares and loves deeply.
- vi. Revelation – separation caused by sin is no more.
  - 1. The relational element has returned to proximity and intimacy.
  - 2. It is in the NT author's mind that if you know God in the correct way, you fall in love with Him.
- vii. NT exudes confidence in God and in His Love.
  - 1. Our confidence is in His Grace provided without merit on our part.
  - 2. Works based systems of faith [Catholic] will not avail on the basis of works our salvation.
  - 3. A Catholic may be saved, but it is unlikely they would otherwise understand love in terms of Eph 3.
  - 4. Both the rebuke and encouragement of believers were necessary to promote grace.

#### 4. Lutheranism and Calvinism

- a. Lutheranism is Calvinism light. The Catholic 'counter-reformation' corrected some of the issues that Luther correctly argued against. The result is a gradient of theological movement.
- b. Calvin was one of the most brilliant lawyers of his day. His system of faith approached theology as a lawyer.
- c. Luther was educated as a lawyer, but instead chose to be a monk.
- d. Luther and Calvin agreed on some things in regards to salvation:
  - i. "Sola Gratia" – we are saved by God's Grace alone, humanity is totally dead to God's Goodness and self disclosure.
  - ii. "Sola Fida" – by faith alone. Works of sinful humanity have no merit before a Holy God.
  - iii. "Sola Scriptura" – by scripture alone. Scripture preempts Dogma and the teachings of the church.
  - iv. "Sola Christos" – by Christ alone, not by sacraments or works, nor any other mediator.
- e. From Luther and Calvin it was affirmed that the "Gospel is the birth, life, death, & resurrection of Christ." It is not just about the Kingdom of God – the death & resurrection of Jesus is the centerpiece of the gospel – the good news for humanity.
- f. Other changes from Catholicism:
  - i. Belief in the Spiritual Presence of God as the indwelling Holy Spirit.
  - ii. Con-substantiation – the belief that Christ was present with the faithful as they took the elements, rather than trans-substantiation – that the

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elements were supernaturally transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ.

iii. No other spiritual mediator is needed other than what God has provided – the Son and the Spirit.

g. Response to OT Law

i. Calvin:

1. Law teaches that we are sinful.
2. Law restrains sinfulness in society.
3. Law is a guide for us to follow even to this day.
  - a. Sabbath & Tithing are necessary and requisite.
  - b. In Christ, we are able to live in the law [this is not what Paul taught in Galatians].
  - c. Book Calvin's Geneva is a literal application & continuation of the Mosaic civil law.
    - i. Supported eye for an eye.
    - ii. Stoning adulterers.
    - iii. Burning heretics.
    - iv. Stoning for blasphemy.

ii. Luther agreed with the above, except for 'c'.

iii. There are modern theologians who interpret Calvin's aspects of law as:

1. Spiritual – morality among believers.
2. Earthly – Abraham Kuyper – Dutch Reformed Theologian
  - a. Saw social and political matters in terms of a sphere – giving intellectual and political justification to pluralism, and limiting the power of the state.
  - b. A strong lover of liberty, and anti-totalitarianism – be it church or state.
  - c. Saw the function of the state to preserve God's justice in society.
3. Reconstructionist – implementation of civil & moral law that permeated government & society. Original 'moral majority' sort of thinking.

iv. Contemporary evangelicals:

1. The ethic of Christ told us to look inwardly [internal], not outwardly [external].
2. The morality of the heart knows it is impossible to live the Sermon on the Mount.

A. Questions for evangelicals to ponder/consider in discussing what is necessary for eternal salvation, ask:

a. What is central to faith in Christ? And what is peripheral?

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- b. Understand that most Catholics and professing Christians don't really understand what they believe. Most have not thought through what they are taught – this is not discipleship.**
- c. Do professing believers actually enjoy faith? Or are they fearful and burdened?**
- d. What is the importance of ignorant child-like faith in comparison with a works based system?**
- e. What are the basics, and what are the deal breakers? There are deal breakers in the gospel – Gerry Breshears mentions 4 levels of belief:**
  - i. The things you would die for – completely certain.**
  - ii. The things you would divide for – mostly certain.**
  - iii. The things you would decide for – not certain.**
  - iv. The things you would debate for – uncertain.**