

## Lecture 36 – Reaction & Renewal: The Roman Catholic Church in the Modern World

“The disadvantage of men not knowing the past is that they do not know the present. History is a hill or high point of vantage from which alone men see the town in which they live or the age in which they are living.”  
G. K. Chesterton

“That the generation to come...might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” Psalm 78:7, 8

### Background Reading

Gonzalez, chs. 27, 29, 33

### Prayer

From the Sarum Primer

God be in my head and in my understanding;  
God be in my eyes and in my looking;  
God be in my mouth and in my speaking;  
God be in my heart in and in my thinking;  
God be at mine end and at my departing. Amen.

## Reaction & Renewal: The Roman Catholic Church in the Modern World

### I. Review of Roman Catholic History

A. 16th and 17th centuries—recovery in Europe and worldwide expansion

B. 18th century—decline

1. Collapse of Portugal and Spain as world powers
2. Hostility of China and Japan to Catholic missions
3. Dissolution of the Jesuit order in 1773 (reconstituted in 1814)
4. Anti-clericalism of the French Revolution

C. 19th century—most “conservative” century in Roman Catholic history

1. Renewed missionary activity (Gregory XVI [1831-46])
2. Triumph of Ultramontanism (Pius IX [1846-78])
3. Opposition to liberalism
  - a. Robert de Lamennais (1782-1854)
  - b. Syllabus of Errors (1864) (Denied that the Roman pontiff can and ought to reconcile and harmonize himself with progress, with liberalism, and with modern civilization”)
4. Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854) and the Assumption of Mary (1950)

Modern Catholic writer Karl Adam: “The Bible is silent about [the dogmatic promulgations about Mary]. They are only implicitly contained in the scriptural passages about Mary and were elaborated only by the Church’s tradition....It was clear christological truths and insights...which fertilized the Mariology of the Fathers....The instinct of the faithful has always rejected the notion that Mary’s immaculate body...could ever have turned to dust or become food for worms....But the Protestant conscience stops short at the words of the Bible and feels opposed by each new dogma of the Church that goes beyond the Bible” (*One and Holy*).  
Luther: “We want to hold the dear virgin and holy mother in all honor, as she certainly deserves to be honored; yet we do not want to honor her in such a way that we make her equal to her Son, Christ. For she was not crucified for us, nor did she die for us or

pray for us on the cross; but Christ was crucified for us and died and pleaded and prayed for us with tears on the cross. Therefore honor Mother Mary as you desire; but do not accord her the honor which we should accord Christ" (*What Luther Says* 3: 1257).

5. Vatican I (1869-70) ("Manuscript Letter from Charles Hodge to Pope Pius IX")
  - a. Papal infallibility ("The Roman pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra, that is, when in discharge of his office of pastor and doctor of all Christians...is endowed by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that the church should be furnished in defining doctrine of faith or morals.")
  - b. Triumph of the papacy
- D. 20th century—dramatic changes
  1. John XXIII (1958-63)
  2. Vatican II (1962-65)
    - a. Renewal: *Aggiornamento* (up-dating or re-defining)
    - b. New openness toward "separated brethren"
    - c. Continuing commitment to papacy and Catholic dogma
  3. The New Catechism of the Catholic Church
  4. Response to Vatican II
    - a. Dismay
    - b. Evangelicalism
    - c. Modernism

## II. Evangelicals and Catholics

- A. Two-way conversions
- B. Reasons why evangelicals convert to Catholicism
  1. Historical consciousness
  2. Dogmatic certainty
  3. Transcendence in worship
- C. "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Christian Mission in the Third Millennium"
- D. "The Gift of Salvation"

### For Further Study

A. Read "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." Use the following questions to guide your thinking.

- \*What is the burden of the "Introduction"? Are you comfortable with it?
- \*In the section "We Affirm Together" is salvation by grace included? Salvation by grace alone?
- \*What are the themes of the section "We Hope Together"?
- \*Do you think the section "We Search Together" states the differences between Catholics and Evangelicals clearly?
- \*What are the concerns expressed in the section "We Contend Together"? How do you respond to this list of "public responsibilities"? What, if anything, would you change?
- \*In the section "We Witness Together," there is a distinction made between "evangelizing" and "proselytizing." Is it a legitimate difference?
- \*Would you endorse the statement "Evangelicals & Catholics Together"?

B. Read "The 23rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America Response to 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together.'" Do you agree?

C. Read “The Gift of Salvation.” How do you assess this statement? Is it in your opinion more Catholic or more Protestant? Compare the above statements to “Manuscript Letter from Charles Hodge to Pope Pius IX.”