

Pastor Mike's Bookshelf

What Still Divides Us: The Differences Between Protestants and Roman Catholics

Josh Maloney

Last week's book review on the Nicene Creed focused on the faith we hold in common with other Christian traditions, including the Roman Catholic Church. We both confess the Nicene Creed and the truths it contains. So why are we still divided? Wasn't the Reformation 500 years ago? Are the differences still that important? This little book seeks to answer that question.

There is a lot of attention on the Roman Catholic church right now with the election of a new pope under way. That process emphasizes some of the key differences between protestants and Catholics. But the differences that divide are deeper than customs regarding electing leaders.

Josh Maloney points to four questions that illustrate the differences:

- How Are We Saved?
- How Does God Speak to Us?
- Who Runs the Church?
- How Should Christians Worship God?

Although we have much in common with the Roman Catholic Church, some of the differences that remain touch on very significant issues, most especially on the Gospel, the good news that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Is salvation an entirely free gift, worked and given by God completely as a gift, or are we required to contribute to our salvation by our actions? In seeking to answer that question, do we rely on Scripture alone as the normative source of truth, or do the traditions of the church also serve as a norming truth? In this brief book, Maloney points out that the key teachings of the Reformation are still relevant and important today.

While I appreciate very much Maloney's answers to the first three questions, as Lutherans we would part ways regarding some of his answer to the fourth question, specifically about the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Maloney is writing from a Calvinist Reformed perspective, and although there is much we agree with regarding the sacraments as means of grace, there are differences as well. I would recommend referring to our "Discovering the Christian Faith" online videos (<https://church.stjohnsnapa.org/grow/discovering-the-christian-faith>), especially Sessions 8, 9 and 10, for a presentation of the Lutheran teaching on the sacraments.

If you are looking to better understand what still divides protestants from Roman Catholics, I recommend this book. I have placed a copy of this book on the church library cart in the church entryway. Previous recommendations can be found here: <https://church.stjohnsnapa.org/resources/pastor-mikes-bookshelf>