**Bellarmine’s Critique of Protestantism:   
Tridentine Roman Catholicism vs. the Reformation**

Written by Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), the [*Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disputationes_de_controversiis_christianae_fidei) (also called *Controversiae*) were the earliest attempt to systematize the various religious disputes between Catholics and Protestants. This work was used by Protestant theologians as representative of Tridentine Catholic theology. Bellarmine’s comprehensive and thoughtful critique of Protestantism provides a useful opportunity to review the core elements that were at stake in the theological debate after the Council of Trent. It is an enlightening source for all those interested in the Roman Catholic evaluation of Protestantism and vice versa.

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1. **“Propugnaculum fortissimum” (the strong bulwark): A Life Dedicated to the Counter-Reformation**

A Survey of Bellarmine’s Life and Works

**2.** **A Battle Around the Ninth and Tenth Articles of the Creed**

An Analysis of Bellarmine’s Contention That the Dispute Against the Reformation Revolves Around These Two Articles

9. I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of the saints

10. And the forgiveness of sins

1. **The Manifold Case Against the Reformation Unfolded**

A Sample of Bellarmine’s Discussions around the Word of God, the Church and Justification by Faith

**4**. **After Bellarmine What?**

According to Avery Dulles “theologians are called to do again, in a vastly changed context, something analogous to what Bellarmine did with remarkable success, for early modern times”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Rome is looking for another Bellarmine who will be capable of “updating” the Roman Catholic system, i.e. adapting it to the new “ecumenical” age that no longer thinks in terms of “controversies” but in terms of “unity”, so that the Protestant Reformation will be declared “over”.

***Selected Bibliography***

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1. Avery Dulles, *Saint Robert Bellarmine: A Moderate in a Disputatious Age*, “Crisis Magazine” (December 1994) pp. 39-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)