

Scripture and Tradition

- I. tradition: The action of handing over (something material) to another; delivery, transfer. (Chiefly in *Law*). Delivery, *esp.* oral delivery, of information or instruction. An ordinance or institution orally delivered.
- II. An important distinctive of Roman Catholicism is its position on final authority.
 - A. It does not hold that the truth of Scripture is the final authority but rather that the Church is an infallible institution of Christ which determines inspired truth through its leaders. The position may be summarized as follows:
 1. Christ established an infallible Church from which came the inspired Word.
 2. How did Christ establish this infallible Church? He did so through His Word.
 3. Why was this Word trustworthy to begin with? Because the infallible Church says so.
 4. This is circular reasoning at its finest.
 - B. Having vested itself with ultimate authority, the Roman Catholic Church presumes to determine inspired truth and that it is not limited to the Scripture.
 1. "It [the Church] also clearly perceives that these truths and rules are contained in the written books and in the **unwritten traditions**...dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession." (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 1546, *emph. added*)
 2. "The Second Vatican Council describes Tradition and Sacred Scripture as being 'like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks to God'...Together, Tradition and Scripture 'form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the Church.'"
(*Handbook for Today's Catholic*, Liguori Publications, 1978, pp. 24-25).
 3. "Catholics, on the other hand, say the bible is not the sole rule of faith and nothing in the Bible suggests it was meant to be. In fact, the Bible indicates it is not to be taken by itself. The true rule of faith is Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the **oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles** plus the authority to interpret Scripture rightly." (Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, p. 134, *emph. added*)
 4. "It reduces to the proposition that, without the existence of the Church, we could not tell if the Bible were inspired." (Ibid, p. 126)
- II. A Scripture text which is often used to support the notion of inspired non-Scriptural traditions is **2TH 2:15**.
 - A. This is a case of a reference text being used as a proof text.
 - B. The "word" and "epistle" under consideration in context is the *apostolic* word and epistle as opposed to the *non-apostolic* word and epistle to which the Thessalonians may have been subjected. **2TH 2:2**.
 - C. The traditions they had been taught by word were obviously apostolic traditions in context. **2TH 3:6**.
 - D. The text is simply setting forth the two ways by which the Thessalonians had received the apostolic gospel and order: preaching and epistle. **ACT 17:1-3; 1TH 2:1-2; 5:27**.
 - E. It is striking that, from this very chapter which denounces Antichrist's perversion of true religion (as defined by the apostles), the Roman Catholic Church has capriciously interpreted a text to justify non-apostolic, extra-biblical traditions which rival and counter apostolic revelation and Scripture in general.

- III. “Tradition” (single or plural form) appears thirteen times in Scripture.
MAT 15:2-3, 6; MAR 7:3, 5, 8-9, 13; GAL 1:14; COL 2:8; 2TH 2:5; 3:6; 1PE 1:18.
- A. Our Lord Jesus blasted the received traditions of the Jewish elders which He measured against the written commandments of the Law. Compare the above with **MAT 22:29.**
 - B. Paul, upon conversion, abandoned received tradition (**GAL 1:14**) in favor of Scripture. **ACT 17:2; 18:28; 24:14-15; 28:23; ROM 4:3; GAL 4:30.**
 - C. Peter likewise condemned “...vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers” (**1PE 1:18**).
 - D. The only positive uses of the term are in **2TH 2:15; 3:6**, which refer to apostolic tradition.
 - E. The same Greek word translated as “tradition(s)” (*paradosis*, SRN G3862) is translated as “ordinances” in **1CO 11:2**, a text which upholds apostolic directive, not post-apostolic traditions.
 - F. It should be remembered that the Holy Spirit was promised to the apostles to guide THEM into all truth. **JOH 16:13.**
 1. The Spirit first gave them *utterance*: they preached. **ACT 2:4 c/w 1PE 1:12.**
 2. The Spirit gave them *orders, prompts* and *determinations*. **ACT 10:19-20; 15:8, 28.**
 3. The Spirit followed up on their preaching and determinations with *letters* to the churches. **ACT 15:22-23; 1CO 15:1.**
- IV. The apostolic writings were to be the enduring directives for the churches.
- A. The apostolic determination *written* to the Gentile churches (**ACT 15**) consisted of the *decrees to be kept*. **ACT 16:4.**
 - B. Paul commanded his epistles to be read and obeyed. **COL 4:16; 1TH 5:27; 2TH 3:14.**
 1. What was preached could be misrepresented or forgotten. **ROM 3:8; 1CO 15:2.**
 2. What was written was a standing record that could be copied and spread around. Jesus promised that He would send scribes. **MAT 23:34.**
 3. God favors preservation of His words in writing, not by oral transmission. **EXO 31:18; DEU 17:18-19; ISA 30:8; EZE 43:11; REV 1:11.**
 - C. Peter declared Paul’s epistles to be Scripture. **2PE 3:15-16.**
 1. They were therefore inspired as were other scriptures. **2TI 3:15-16.**
 2. The inspired scriptures are for the perfecting of the man of God to thoroughly furnish him unto all good works. **2TI 3:17.**
 3. If the scriptures thoroughly furnish and perfect the man of God, so be it!
 4. Nowhere in Scripture is it stated or implied that unwritten non-apostolic traditions are co-revelations on par with Scripture to perfect saints.
 5. The apostles even limited what they wrote. **JOH 20:30-31; 21:24-25.**
 - D. The apostles’ *writings* even confirm the O.T. canon of Scripture, excluding the Apocrypha. **LUK 24:44-45.**
 - E. By contrast, not all of the apostles’ *oral* words, post-Pentecost, were inspired.
 1. Peter in weakness dissembled and misled Gentile believers. **GAL 2:11-14.**
 2. Paul once spoke by passion, contrary to prophecy. **ACT 23:3-5.**
 3. If even the apostles’ mouths could err and leave bad examples, how much more anyone subsequent to them?
 - F. Contrary to the decrees of the Council of Trent, Paul declared that saints may gain understanding in the knowledge of God by **READING** what he **WROTE**. **EPH 3:3-4.**
 - G. Scripture cannot be broken (**JOH 10:35**) but oral traditions have been historically sketchy, contrary to Scripture, and even discarded as errant or have been reversed.
- V. **1CO 14:37-38.**