

CATHOLIC TRADITION VERSUS THE BIBLE

FOREWORD

The Roman Catholic Church follows the Bible as the word of God. But it is not from the Bible alone that the Church gets its doctrines. The vast majority of Catholic teachings are not in the Bible. Catholic teaching is that tradition alone is enough. That is bad news for those who say past teachings can be contradicted! "Although the Catholic Church has no wish to suppress or destroy the Bible, she does not regard it as necessary. Here we come to an impression which is not without some grounds for it. Indeed, Catholic apologists themselves have stressed the fact that even if the Bible should suddenly perish from the earth, through some great calamity, it would not affect one single doctrine of the Catholic Church nor imperil her existence. It is to be noted that such a loss would, in the estimate of Catholics, be a great calamity. They regard the possession of the Bible as a very great blessing. At the same time, they declare that the Bible is not necessary to the existence of the Catholic Church or to the continuance of her mission to mankind; and it is that which needs to be understood" - Fr Leslie Rumble.

The Church allegedly has made a new teaching that God used evolution to make man and woman is not in the Bible.

The new doctrine that the Bible has errors is totally contrary to the Bible which claims that God wrote it as well as men.

The new doctrine that capital punishment is wrong except in very rare and unusual circumstances is totally contradictory to the Bible which is very liberal with it and claims divine authority for this liberalism.

The new doctrine that homosexuality is of unknown origin is contrary to the Bible which says in Romans 1 that the urge is granted to people as punishment for sin and the Old Testament makes no exceptions to the rule that homosexuals caught together in the act must be put to death.

The doctrine that God is a spirit in the Greek philosophy sense of being a substance with no parts or components is contrary to the Bible which only says that God cannot be seen and is like the wind or breath.

The doctrine that the pope is the successor of Peter, that Peter was the first pope, that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, that the pope is infallible and that the pope is the head of the Church is not to be found in the Bible.

The doctrine that the Church has the power to be infallible is not in the Bible. At most, the Bible may merely say that there will always be true Christians on the earth.

The doctrine that baptism in water is for children, puts them into the Church and forgives their sins and their original sin is not in the Bible.

The doctrine that baptism is obligatory and saves the soul is not in the Bible.

The doctrine that priests turn bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and perpetuate the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross at Calvary at Mass is not in the Bible.

The doctrine that Jesus was God and conceived without sperm is not in the Bible.

The doctrine that Mary was conceived without original sin and never sinned and had no children but Jesus and was taken to Heaven after she died body and soul is not in the Bible.

The doctrine that we must pray to the angels and saints is not in the Bible.

The books the Catholic Church added to the Bible such as Tobit do not match the standard left by the Bible for determining if a book is the word of God.

The Bible does not teach that there are seven sacraments or that a priest can get a piece of the sacrament of holy orders while the bishop gets the whole – bishops and presbyters or ministers are much the same in the Bible.

The Bible does not teach that priests can forgive sins and should hear the confessions of the people or that the people should confess in detail to the priest and not in general.

It does not teach that good works are necessary for salvation.

It doesn't teach purgatory where you go if you die without your sins being totally wiped out.

These are some of the doctrines that are not in the Bible. In fact there are far more than that. But where did the Church get them from? It got them from tradition.

Tradition is the word of God as well as the Bible according to the Church. Tradition can be reasoned out from existing doctrine or the Bible or it can simply be what the Church says it always did or believed. The latter was the Church's excuse for claiming that Mary went bodily up to Heaven to live forever there as Queen which is not to be found in the first or second century of the Church or in the Bible. Even worse "there is little evidence of the Mary cult during the first four centuries of the Christian era" (page 42, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary, Psychological Origins*, Michael P Carroll, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986). Obviously the Church can do without tradition written down which opens the way for it to teach what it wants and say it was something revealed by God. It based many doctrines on written evidence of tradition in the past that turned out to be fraudulent such as the Donation of Constantine which gave power to the bishop of Rome and led to the formation of the papacy. If we can prove that Catholic tradition is unreliable or forbidden by the Bible or contradicts itself then clearly most of Catholicism's doctrines are false or unworthy of belief.

The Christian gospel is intended for everybody though that doesn't imply that all will be called by God into the Church and to be saved. Christ commanded that the gospel be taught to all creation. The apostle said that God is a God of clarity not confusion. Now if this is so, to have another word of God that depends on oral tradition and a huge volume of writings from the first century down to the papal encyclicals of today is totally contradicting the gospel. We must remember as well that theologians disagree sharply about what is genuine tradition and how to interpret it and that the Church is only loosely united – its made up of disagreeing schools of thought.

THE BIBLE ON TRADITION

Unlike Protestantism, Roman Catholicism does not derive its doctrines from the Bible alone but from Tradition as well. Tradition with a capital T is the word of God.

The Catholic argument that since the Bible sometimes speaks well of tradition and treats it as authoritative, tradition must be an additional authority to the Bible is untenable because the Bible never says tradition is the other authority. Those traditions might have been divinely inspired and might have been incorporated into and enshrined in scripture alone as they were. The Bible started off as inspired traditions which were written down.

And it may be true that there are inspired traditions outside the Bible but that does not mean that we have to rely on them or are meant to. The Bible never tells us to listen to tradition outside its teaching. It was different to take tradition as the word of God during the apostles' day for they infallibly discerned the infallible ones but it is too risky to do so now. The Bible is complete so there is no need to. Protestants believe the Bible doesn't answer all questions but say that it answers enough.

If a lot of important answers are left out of the Bible does that prove that tradition is needed and complements the Bible? It does not when the Bible does not tell us who has the accurate tradition.

Catholics suppose that Isaiah 59:21 in which God says his word will be in the mouths of his people forever is a prediction about the Catholic Church which teaches by word of mouth and not only by a book. Tradition is what is handed down by word of mouth and this verse is supposed to teach the Catholic doctrine. But if the word were to be in a book alone Isaiah would still have written these words.

1 Peter 1:25 is supposed to prove that the Church will preach infallible tradition that is not in scripture forever. It is reasoned that it says that the word of God endures forever and must be the preaching of the Church for the New Testament was far from finished. But if the Church follows the Bible and this book is the only inspired authority used the Church can still preach the word of God that endures forever. This verse gives no grounds for the notion of tradition as endorsed in the Catholic Church. And if some of the New Testament had been written and since there was an Old Testament there is no need for imagining it means the Church teaching at all.

John 21:23 gives an example of a tradition that thrived in the early Church that was wrong. The tradition promised that an apostle would live forever on earth and be the oracle of God to the Church and so late in the first century John had to attack it. This was a very serious blunder – at least it proves that the early Church did not have a pope to correct error especially when Peter had died long before – and shows that tradition is dangerous and the Church is not safe from nonsensical traditions.

The apostle Paul declared that what would become the great apostasy had started (2 Thessalonians 2) so how could we trust tradition? Tradition was the only excuse the apostates would have had for altering the faith.

The Bible predicts that most of the people calling themselves Christians would abandon the faith one day and speaks of the awesome power of Satan to delude (2 Thessalonians 2:3 – it speaks of a “great falling away” or apostasy). It says that false teachings and fabricated apostolic traditions were already being concocted while the apostles were alive under the guidance of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2). Obviously, even if a tradition could be traced back to the lifetime of the apostles it does not mean that it is a revelation of God. The Devil might have created the traditions Catholics speak of and the papacy. In Matthew 12 Jesus said that when demons are cast out and can find no home for there is nobody left to possess they will go back to the man they have left and if he is open to their influence they will take worse demons than themselves with them to possess him and that will happen to Jesus’ evil generation. This implies firstly that tradition is dangerous and the demons have the knowledge and power to pull off a seemingly foolproof deception and it implies that the New Testament could well be a demonic fabrication and that only books you are 100% sure of can be considered to be God’s word. But no such books exist and Jesus really shot himself in the foot.

When the Bible warns of a great apostasy and makes it clear that the world – meaning the vast majority so it is practically the whole world so even most Christians will be traitors though they might continue to infest the Church. Church traditions are most likely to be diabolical or fraudulent in origin and we have to avoid them.

JESUS AGAINST TRADITION

Jesus’ condemnation of tradition only forbids non-inspired tradition or man-made tradition (Matthew 15 or Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23). We must mark how severe he was against it. The scribes and Pharisees before they ate washed up to their elbows always before eating. They asked Jesus why his disciples ate with dirty hands. So far the scribes and Pharisees were reasonable. It is good to wash before eating. But Jesus savaged them by calling them hypocrites who were into religious observances but whose hearts were far from God. Jesus quoted God as saying their worship was useless for their doctrines were human regulations. Then Jesus said that it is only what goes on in your heart that can make you dirty. So Jesus was very much against man-made religion.

Protestants argue that the condemnation of man-made tradition covers Catholic tradition too.

Catholics respond that their tradition is not man-made and that they agree that man-made traditions of religion are sinful.

The Protestants are the most convincing because the Catholic excuse that the traditions came from God is exactly what the scribes and Pharisees would have said too.

But some theologians say that Jesus makes it clear that he refers to man-made tradition not being bad in itself but only when it contradicts the law of God. This overlooks the fact that the issue in question was handwashing and it was not against any command of God. God did stress washing in the Jewish Bible. But the problem with the command is that God did not address handwashing at all. The problem was religion having commandments and doctrines that did not come from God.

It is thought then that Jesus’ opposition to tradition is not proof at least by itself that the Bible alone must be heeded. But the Bible warns that most people will tend towards apostasy and Jesus and the apostles warned about heretics implying that even if tradition was accepted as a parallel authority to the Bible it could not be depended on once the overseers, the apostles, were gone. So the context of Jesus’ condemnation strongly suggests that only tradition that ends up as scripture should be followed. And we must remember that Jesus only said it was man-made tradition because it didn’t fit the Old Testament and added to its teaching. There is no point in condemning man-made tradition if no method is left for distinguishing between man’s teaching and God’s. Jesus made it simple.

Catholic tradition is from man not God and is a serious sin.

TRADITION ITSELF COMMANDS BIBLE ALONE

The Catholic Church holds that the Bible and Tradition are the word of God. Tradition is used to interpret the Bible and thus that leads to Catholics distorting the Bible. And Tradition tends to be cherry-picked. For example, Origen is ignored a lot though he was a major Church father. And Justin Martyr was clear to Trypho that souls go to Heaven the second they die and are not resurrected are not Christians. He is speaking probably of Marcionists who held that you go to Heaven at death and don't come back in your body. Justin is said to be rejecting immediate entry into Heaven only when it is done in a way to undermine resurrection. He is not saying, we are told, that nobody goes to Heaven straight away. They do await resurrection. It is more likely that Justin thought that you don't get to Heaven until you resurrect first! So this rules out prayers to saints and apparitions of saints from Heaven. It rules out a major and core Catholic doctrine.

The very tradition that the Catholic Church makes superior to the Bible and a supplement to the Bible says that it should be ignored in favour of the Bible! Rome no longer believes in Bible inerrancy in the full and complete sense though ancient

tradition is against her in this and supports verbal and plenary inspiration.

The tradition that the fathers honoured and obeyed was tradition that restated what was in the scriptures and was in the scriptures. (See page 15, Traditional Doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church Examined.) St Cyprian is quoted as saying that tradition is just what is taught in the scriptures. Cyril of Alexandria said that the scriptures are enough and more than enough and Tertullian condemned Hermogenes unless he could show that his teachings were in the Bible and pronounced a curse on those who add to and subtract from the Bible and St Basil interpreted the apostles as saying that nobody should believe anything unless it is written in the Bible (page 16).

Justin Martyr was the first source of what Rome recognises as divinely inspired tradition to say that Christ forbade belief in what men say and counselled his followers to believe only in what he himself and the Jewish prophets taught (page 26, Evangelical Catholics; page 23, But the Bible Does Not Say So).

St Irenaeus stated that the Church will find every doctrine it needs in the prophets and the gospels (page 26, Evangelical Catholics). He wrote that when the heretics are refuted from the scriptures they attack the scriptures as being incorrect or uncanonical so in that case he appeals to tradition to confute them (page 27, Church and Infallibility). But what Irenaeus meant by tradition was the practice of revering the scriptures as infallible. He argued that since they were believed to be infallible by tradition since the time of the apostles they were real and uncorrupted. A bible only believer would say much the same thing without regarding tradition as an additional authority.

St Athanasius wrote that the scriptures are enough for learning the truth in (Conte Gentes. 1,1).

St John Chrysostom commanded that no man must be listened to in religion without being checked out by the Bible first (2 Corinthians 6, Homily 13). The same instructed in his Homily on Romans that we must read no other but Jesus and need no other mind (page 27, Secrets of Romanism).

St Jerome protested against creating things as if they were tradition from the apostles without scripture saying they are true (commentary on Haggai, Cap 1.2). He informed Helvidius that anything that was not written in the Bible was to be rejected. He said the Church does not admit anything that is not found in the scriptures (page 23, But the Bible Does Not Say So).

St Basil (329-379) said that since Jesus said his sheep hear his voice and do not listen to strangers that it is wrong to make a doctrine that is not mentioned in the scriptures (De Fide, Garnier's Edition, Vol II, page 313). (See page 26, Evangelical Catholics).

Augustine commanded that any doctrine that is not in the Bible must be refused (page 26, Evangelical Catholics). In 400 AD he expressly stated that he bows only to the authority of the canonical books and that all that is needed for faith and living is in them (page 23, But the Bible Does Not Say So).

Conclusion

The Church has no authority from its God to believe the doctrines it has that are not in the Bible. The doctrines come from purely human authority and to believe them is to believe men not God.

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