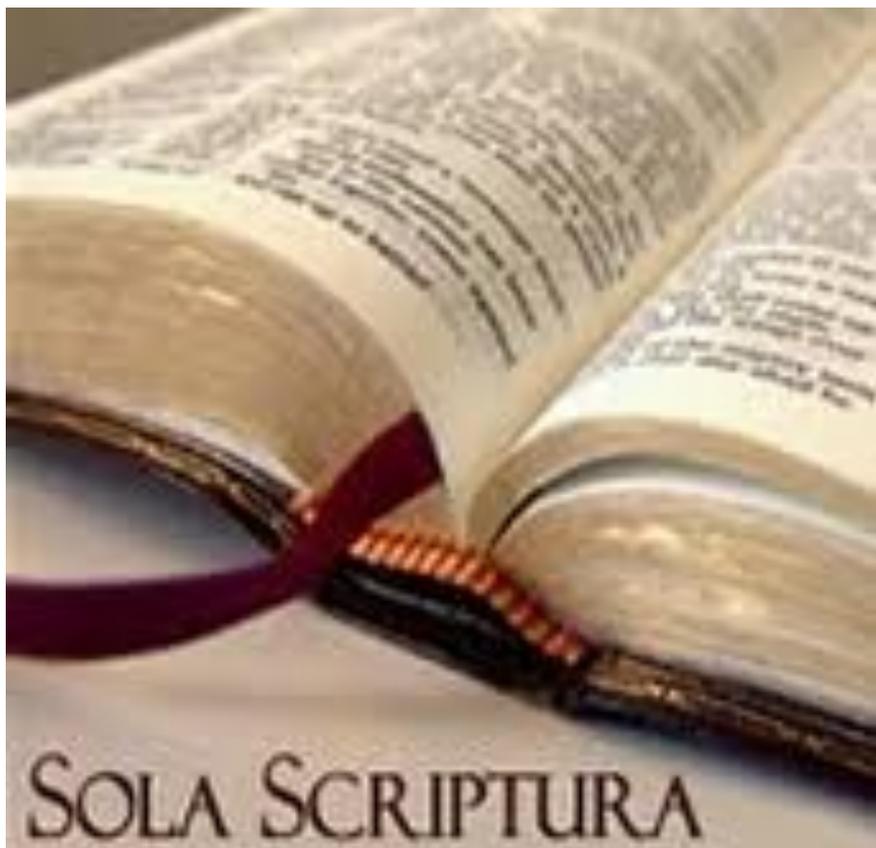


Are the New Testament Scriptures All-Sufficient?

(by George Battey)



SOLA SCRIPTURA

THE CASE FOR "SOLA SCRIPTURA"

By George Battey

The present study presents the following view: **The New Testament scriptures alone constitute religious authority for today.**

The Catholic Church opposes this view. To fully appreciate the significance of this study, it will help to understand the Catholic Church's beliefs and teachings relative to religious authority.

The Catholic Church believes the apostles of the Lord received all truth, but they did not write all truth down in the New Testament (NT) scriptures. They wrote some of the truth in the scriptures but the remaining truth was kept in oral form ("oral tradition" as the Catholic Church calls it).

Peter was supposedly the first Pope. Catholics believe Peter was the "head of the church on earth" while Jesus remained the "head of the church" in heaven. This idea is believed to be taught in the statement of Jesus, "upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). The "rock" is believed to be Peter himself. Thus Peter is viewed as the supreme apostle. Peter was given authority ("keys") to supposedly make religious laws on earth. Since the "gates of hell shall not prevail against the church," the conclusion drawn is that Peter was infallible in his official decrees of church laws. If he was susceptible to error, then "hell" would surely "prevail against the church."

After Peter died there were supposedly successors taking his place. Each Pope is believed to have become the new "head of the church on earth." The church in Rome views itself as the mother-church to which all other churches must submit. The church in Rome believes it produced the scriptures and guarded the scriptures through the centuries. The church in Rome believes it decided which books should be in the Bible and which should be excluded. The world would not have a Bible (we are told) were it not for the church at Rome. Also, the church at Rome views itself as the official teaching-magisterium (official teacher). Men are free to read the scriptures if they wish, but they must not think for themselves. The final decision of what any passage teaches is to be decided by the teaching-magisterium (the Church). If men are

allowed to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, the result will be 33,000 differing denominations. Rome "solves" this problem by having an official interpretation. If all churches would simply agree and submit to the authority of the mother-church there would be unity.

FOCUSING ON THE ISSUE

The view being defended in this booklet: The NT scriptures alone constitute religious authority for today.

The NT scriptures. By this, we mean the 27 books which Catholics themselves agree are sacred NT scriptures. There is no disagreement at this point between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church about which books belong in the NT. We do not agree concerning the books of the Old Testament (OT), but in this discussion the OT is not the issue. The issue is: What constitutes religious authority for today.

The Bible itself clearly teaches that no OT book is authoritative today. Not even Genesis has laws that are binding on Christians today. The same goes for Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. None of these books have laws that are binding on Christians today. If it could be proven the extra books of the Catholic Bible (the Apocryphal books) should indeed be in our Bibles, it would not matter in this discussion, because no OT book is binding as religious authority today.

OT Vs. NT

The OT scriptures are called the "Law of Moses" (Joshua 8:32). This law and these scriptures were given only to Israel (Deuteronomy 5:2-3; Romans 3:1-2). This law and these scriptures were not given to Gentiles (Romans 2:14-15). These laws are helpful today in learning and understanding (Romans 15:4), but the laws of the OT are not binding today.

Moses himself knew his law would not last forever.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19

18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

This Prophet is Jesus (Acts 3:22-23). Deuteronomy 18 teaches that when Jesus comes, men must do what He says. The commandments of Jesus would replace the commandments given by Moses. The voice from heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration did not tell the disciples to listen to Moses and the prophets. The voice told the disciples to listen to Jesus alone (Matthew 17:1-9).

When Jesus came, He brought a new testament.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah —

32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

This NT would be different than the OT. It would have laws that must be kept (see verse 33 above). Religious authority today comes in the NT scriptures given by Jesus. Religious authority today does not reside in the OT scriptures. This explains:

- Why Christians do not have animal sacrifices (like the OT taught).
- Why Christians do not require circumcision (like the OT taught).
- Why Christians do not execute offenders by stoning them (like the OT taught).
- Why Christians do not keep the 7th day Sabbath (like the OT taught).
- Why Christians do not forbid the eating of pork (like the OT taught).
- Why Christians do not have instrumental music (like the OT taught).

Only those laws given in NT scriptures are binding upon God's people today.

Galatians 3:24-25

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Colossians 2:14

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

The OT scriptures were nailed to the cross. Those laws are no longer binding. What, then, makes murder wrong today? The fact that the OT said, "Thou shalt not murder"? No. Murder is wrong because the NT teaches, "Whoever is even angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22). What makes adultery wrong today? The fact that the OT said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"? No. Adultery is wrong because the NT teaches, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

AUTHORITY & AUTHORIZED AGENTS

Christians are instructed to do only those things which are authorized by the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3:17

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

"Whatever you do" means anything and everything a Christian might do. "In word" refers to things we teach. "In deed" refers to things we practice. "In the name of the Lord Jesus" means by the authority of Jesus. (See 1 Samuel 25:9 and Acts 4:7 to understand the phrase "in the name of.")

The apostles of the Lord were His official representatives.

2 Corinthians 5:20

20 Now then, we [apostles] are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

This is speaking of the apostles. They were ambassadors (official representatives). Since the apostles were official representatives of the Lord, to do something by the authority of Jesus means:

- Doing something which Jesus Himself personally taught.
- Doing something which His apostles (official representatives) taught.

"ALL TRUTH"

The Lord promised His apostles they would be guided into all truth.

John 14:25-26

25 "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 16:12-13

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Peter later confirmed this actually occurred. The apostles did indeed have "all truth" revealed to them (2 Peter 1:3-4).

THE APOSTLES WROTE

The apostles wrote down on paper the truths revealed to them.

Ephesians 3:3-5

3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

There are four important words to notice.

- "Revelation" (verse 3) / "revealed" (verse 5) – *an uncovering*. The scriptures uncover God's will. The fact that the scriptures are a "revelation" means they are understandable. If the scriptures are not understandable, they are not truly a revelation.
- "Written" (verse 3) – what was revealed to the apostles was written down. This refers to the NT scriptures.
- "Read" (verse 4) – the ordinary Christians of Ephesus are being instructed to read these writings of Paul. The scriptures were meant to be read by ordinary people.
- "Understand" (verse 4) – this passage explicitly says ordinary Christians can understand their own reading of the scriptures.

This passage makes no mention of mystical power from the Holy Spirit that is needed to enlighten someone's understanding. There is no mention of an authoritative interpreter to explain the writings.

7 PASSAGES

There are at least seven Bible passages clearly teaching the writings of the apostles and NT prophets that form a complete set of instructions for Christians. Jesus promised "all truth" would be revealed to the apostles, and the scriptures themselves claim to contain all that was revealed to them. Furthermore, the NT scriptures can be demonstrated to be understandable. It is, therefore, unnecessary to have an official teaching-magisterium in order to know all of God's will for today. Consider each of these seven passages carefully.

PASSAGE #1:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This passage is perhaps the most powerful passage in all of the Bible to demonstrate the sufficiency of the scriptures alone. Nothing more is needed besides the scriptures.

Some argue this passage refers only to OT scriptures and not to NT scriptures. Here's how the argument goes:

- The scriptures under consideration in verses 16-17 are the same scriptures under consideration in verse 15.
- The "Holy Scriptures" of verse 15 are scriptures which Timothy knew as a child growing up.
- The NT scriptures were not written when Timothy was a child. All he knew as a child were the OT scriptures.
- Therefore, the "scripture" mentioned in verses 16-17 cannot include NT scriptures.

It is true that the "Holy Scriptures" in verse 15 refer to the OT scriptures only. But the word "scriptures" in verse 16 includes more than just the OT. In verse 16 Paul begins to speak about "ALL scripture" (the OT and the NT). It is easy to demonstrate this is the case.

Notice carefully: The "all scripture" of verses 16-17 make a man "complete" and "thoroughly furnished" for "every good work." If we can find one "good work" in the NT, which is not contained in the OT, we will have shown verses 16-17 include more than just OT scriptures. Is there a "good work" in the NT scriptures which was not revealed in the OT scriptures? Yes. The Lord's supper is a good work which was not recorded in OT scripture (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Therefore, the "scriptures" mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 includes more than simply OT scriptures.

Everything a Christian needs to be "complete" and "thoroughly equipped for every good work" is supplied by the scriptures. If a Christian needs oral traditions in addition to the scriptures, then the scriptures did not actually make him "complete" and "thoroughly equipped." If a Christian needs a teaching-magisterium, then the scriptures did not actually make him "complete" and

"thoroughly equipped." If a Christian needs enlightenment from the Holy Spirit in addition to the scriptures, then the scriptures did not truly make him "complete" and "thoroughly equipped." Therefore, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 proves the NT scriptures alone are sufficient. They alone constitute religious authority today.

PASSAGE #2:

James 1:25

James 1:25

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The words "looks into" (παρὰκλύπτω) are translated from a Greek word meaning, "*to look carefully into, inspect curiously*" (Thayer); "*bend over and look*" (Gingrich).

There are three points to consider here.

- a) The law of this verse gives liberty. The OT did not give liberty. Hence, this refers to the NT law. (See Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13).
- b) The law of this verse is in a form which one can bend over and look at it. Here is the law in a visible form.
- c) The law of this verse is in a form accessible to all Christians.

The "oral traditions" taught by the Catholic Church are not accessible to all Christians. The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church is the only one who has access to the supposed "oral traditions." The magisterium parcels out only the portions of these "oral traditions" which they see fit and only when they see fit. However, the law of James 1:25 is accessible to all Christians. They are invited to "bend over and look into" it and see for themselves what God wants them to do.

Next, notice the words "the *perfect* law of liberty" (τέλειος). This word "perfect" is the same word found in 1 Corinthians 13:10. To refresh our memory, it means, "*brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to*

completeness; perfect" (Thayer). This means the written law is complete – having all necessary parts and components. If Christians need extra guidance from the Holy Spirit to understand the law, then it is not truly "complete." If Christians need an official interpreter to know what the law means, then it is not truly "complete." If Christians need oral traditions in addition to the written law, then it is not truly "complete."

James 1:25 is describing the NT law in its complete and final form. It would be "complete" – supplying everything needed by God's people. This "complete" record of God's law will be available for any Christian who wishes to look into it. This passage teaches the NT scriptures alone are sufficient for all religious authority.

A POSSIBLE OBJECTION: Someone may object by saying, "James 1:25 does not refer to written scriptures because it speaks of one who is 'a forgetful hearer.' Thus, the passage refers to oral teachings of the church which Christians would 'hear,' and it is not referring to written scripture."

This is not a valid objection for the following reason:

Revelation 2:1

1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ...

John was instructed to write words to the church of Ephesus. Watch carefully what the Lord says about these written words:

Revelation 2:7

7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ...

By putting these two verses together, here is what we have: When men read the scriptures they are "hearing" God speak to them. Therefore, when James 1:25 tells people to "look into the law of liberty" and not be a forgetful "hearer," the passage is referring to written scripture wherein God "speaks" to His people, and they "hear" what He says. James 1:25 proves the NT scriptures alone constitute religious authority today.

Again, consider this next passage:

Matthew 22:31

31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,

Jesus is the speaker. He is speaking to the Sadducees. Notice the words, "Have you not read what was spoken to you by God." The Catholic Church would argue that, if something was "spoken to you by God," oral traditions are under consideration. But Jesus said, "Have you not read what was spoken to you." This obviously refers to the written scriptures. It points to a very important fact: When men read the scriptures, they are hearing the voice of God. God speaks through scripture. Hence, many times the word "hear" refers to that which is written in scripture.

When James 1:25 tells people to "look into the law of liberty" and not be a forgetful "hearer," the passage is referring to written scripture. Those scriptures are called "complete" (perfect) – meaning they are all-sufficient for meeting the needs of man today.

PASSAGE #3:

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Consider each verse in this passage.

1 Corinthians 13:8

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

This passage clearly teaches: Miracles will (a) cease, (b) fail and (c) vanish away. Some disagree as to when this will occur, but there can be no argument that it will occur.

1 Corinthians 13:9

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

Paul knew and revealed part of God's will. Peter knew and revealed part of God's will. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, James and Jude also knew part of God's will. As each part was revealed to them, they wrote it down. When they wrote, they knew they were writing sacred scripture.

1 Corinthians 13:10

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

The word "perfect" (τέλειος) means "brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect" (Thayer).

What is this perfect thing referred to in verse 10? What thing could be "wanting nothing necessary to completeness" which would make prophesying, tongue speaking and miraculous knowledge obsolete? The answer is: A completed written record of God's will – the NT scriptures. The NT scriptures are called "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25).

First Corinthians 13:8-10 is teaching that when God's will has been completely revealed in written form Christians will not need the gift of prophesying anymore, because God's entire will shall have been revealed. Christians will not need the gift of tongues because God's word will have been thoroughly confirmed. (Tongues were a gift of confirmation.) Nor will Christians need the gift of knowledge to explain God's will because God's entire will shall have been written down in a permanent, understandable form.

1 Corinthians 13:11

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Miraculous powers are being compared to children's toys. When the church first started, it needed miraculous powers just like a child needs toys. The church needed prophesying to know the laws of the NT in the absence of written scripture. It needed tongues to confirm the divine origin of the word. It needed the gift of knowledge to teach the people in the absence of written scripture. In time the church matured. The word which was originally in the minds of the apostles only was eventually written down on paper. With the completion of the NT scriptures, the "childish things were put away," just as a child matures and puts away his toys. This is when miracles ceased.

1 Corinthians 13:12

12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Mirrors in those days were simply polished metal. (See Ex 38:8). As the mirror was being made, people could begin to see their reflection. At first, when the metal was just beginning to shine, the image reflected was dim and unclear. The more the metal was polished, the clearer the image became. When the

mirror was completed, men could see themselves clearly. They could see themselves as clearly as others saw them.

God's revealed will is compared to a mirror.

James 1:23-25

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

At the time the apostle Paul wrote the Book of 1 Corinthians, the "mirror" was in the process of being made. Each time another book of the NT was written, things were becoming clearer and clearer. Paul himself was polishing the mirror (contributing his part to the NT scriptures). When the mirror was completed, men could look into the scriptures and see themselves clearly – just as others saw them. As a matter of fact, men could see themselves like God Himself saw them.

First Corinthians 13:8-13 teaches us the NT scriptures were in the process of being written and once they were completed there would be no more miraculous powers because everything Christians needed to function in this world would be supplied in those written scriptures.

PASSAGE #4:

2 Peter 1:12-15

2 Peter 1:12-15

12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,

14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Peter is about to die. He is concerned for Christians. He wants them to always remember what he and the other apostles have taught. This is the very purpose of Peter writing his book. The very purpose of the scriptures, according to this, is so Christians will have the teachings of the apostles in permanent form. This passage does not envision a successor after Peter dies. Peter is concerned for the church and he wants it to have a permanent reminder of what he and the other apostles had taught.

Paul wrote something similar:

1 Timothy 3:14-15

14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Paul writes so Timothy will know how to conduct himself in the absence of an apostle. The apostles wrote the scriptures to be a guide in their absence. They never envisioned living successors who would replace them after they died. There would not always be living apostles. The scriptures of the apostles would guide God's people after the apostolic age.

Are the written scriptures all-sufficient? Are they capable and sufficient to guide God's people in the absence of the apostles? Peter and Paul thought they would be sufficient, but what does God think?

Isaiah 55:11

11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

This OT passage demonstrates God's word always accomplishes the purpose for which it was designed. The writings of the apostles are the word of God for His people today. Therefore these writings are adequate to accomplish the purpose for which they were written. Second Peter 1:12-15 proves the NT scriptures alone are a sufficient record and guide for God's people today because they remind us of what the apostles taught. Those scriptures were meant to be our guide in the absence of the apostles themselves.

PASSAGE #5:
2 Peter 1:19-21

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.

21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In the three verses preceding this passage, Peter described being on the Mount of Transfiguration. He heard the voice of God with his own ears saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Now, Peter tells us we have God's word in a form that is "more certain" than what can be heard with the ears and seen with the eyes. What could possibly be more reliable than hearing God speak with His own voice? The answer is: the written scriptures.

The sentence, "no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation," means no written scripture is of private origin. According to the original Greek, "interpretation" (ἐπίλυσις) refers to the origin of scripture. "*The gen. (ablative) here indicates source. Peter is talking about the divine origin of Scripture, not about its proper interpretation*" (Rogers & Rogers).

Second Peter 1:19-21 means no prophet ever sat down and invented scripture from his own interpretation of current events. Instead, prophets wrote the very words given to them by the Holy Spirit. Peter said the written scriptures are more reliable than hearing with one's own ears a voice from the clouds. How could this possibly be? Look at the following passage:

John 12:28-29

28 Father, glorify Your name."

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

Here were people who heard with their own ears the voice of God, but they were confused. "Was that thunder we just heard?" they asked themselves. "Was that God or an angel?" they wondered. Hearing with the ear can be confusing. But having the inspired, written word is "more certain."

Second Peter 1:19-21 proves the NT scriptures are sufficient for man's needs today because the written scriptures present God's word in the most convincing and reliable form possible – a written record. The written word is more reliable than the spoken word. Ask any lawyer. Ask any landlord. Ask anyone who made what they thought was a "binding agreement" on a handshake alone. As time passes people "forget" exactly what was spoken. But the written word is "more certain." The written word does not "forget."

PASSAGE #6:

1 John 2:27

1 John 2:27

27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Here is something called "the anointing." What is this referring to? Whatever it is, we know this much about it:

- This "anointing" abides in all Christians.
- This "anointing" teaches all Christians.
- This "anointing" teaches Christians about "all things" – with no needed information left out.

What could this "anointing" be? Back up to verse 24 of this very same chapter:

Verse 24

Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

The "anointing" which abides with all Christians and teaches them "concerning all things" is a reference to the teachings of the apostles. The apostles' teachings were put into written form – written scriptures. Notice verse 26

clearly indicates these teachings were "written" down:

Verse 26

These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.

Verse 27 says, "you do not need that anyone teach you." This means the revelation of God's word is understandable by the common man. Christians do not need a teaching-magisterium to know God's will. Christians do not need special enlightenment from the Holy Spirit to know God's will. All they need is the written scriptures.

Other passages demonstrating the written word can be understood without a teaching-magisterium include:

- Matthew 24:15
- Mark 13:14
- Luke 10:25-28
- 2 Corinthians 1:13
- Ephesians 3:4

Therefore, 1 John 2:27 proves the NT scriptures are sufficient for man's needs today because through them we learn all the truths the apostles taught, and we "have no need that anyone should teach us" more than what is written.

PASSAGE #7:

Jude 3

Jude 3

3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

In order for this verse to have any meaning, all the truth revealed by the apostles must be in a permanent form available to all Christians. Oral traditions, by their very nature, require that a new delivery be made over and over again to each new generation. However, Jude 3 is discussing the truth in some form which was delivered "once for all time." The only form of revelation which is permanent and done "once for all time" is written revelation. This passage is discussing the written scriptures of the NT.

Furthermore, Christians cannot "contend earnestly" for something they do not know and cannot study. The "oral traditions" taught by the Catholic Church are not accessible to all Christians. The "teaching-magisterium" alone has access to the "oral traditions." They parcel out only the portions they see fit and only when they see fit. Oral traditions could never fulfill the wording of Jude 3.

Therefore, Jude 3 proves the NT scriptures are sufficient for man's needs today because those scriptures alone were delivered "once for all time to the saints." Oral teachings could never be delivered "once for all time," but the scriptures can be and were.

CONCLUSION

It is not denied that, when the church first began, the teachings of the apostles were in oral form. No one denies that. However, the oral teachings of the apostles were identical with their written letters. They did not say one thing orally and convey something different in writing.

2 Corinthians 10:10-11

10 "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

11 Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.

This passage explains that the oral teachings of the apostles were identical to their writings. Their teachings were put into written form and preserved for all future generations. These written scriptures are all-sufficient. They are sufficient for God's people and they alone constitute religious authority for today.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Now we shall consider common questions regarding the all-sufficiency of the NT scriptures.

Question #1: Does Acts 1:20 teach a succession of apostles?

Yes and no. Acts 1:15-26 records the replacement of Judas. Does this prove that each time an apostle died, a replacement was chosen? No. Judas did not

cease being an apostle because he died. He ceased being an apostle because of transgression.

Acts 1:24-25

24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen
25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

Judas fell from the apostleship by transgression, not by death. When James died (Acts 12:1-2), there was no replacement chosen for him. He did not cease being an apostle simply because he died.

When heaven is described, there are twelve foundations inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14). If replacements were made each time an apostle or his successor died, there would be hundreds of foundations each inscribed with the names of each replacement.

Question #2: What were the requirements for replacing an apostle?

Here are the qualifications to be an apostle:

Acts 1:21-22

21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Qualification #1: One had to accompany the Lord beginning with the baptism of John until the day He ascended back into heaven.

Qualification #2: One had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord.

There were only two men who met these qualifications after Judas transgressed and died: Justus and Matthias. Of these two, the Lord Himself chose Matthias (Acts 1:26). After Matthias was chosen, there were now twelve apostles again (1 Corinthians 15:5). These twelve apostles remained faithful

until their deaths. They did not "fall by transgression." When they died, there were no replacements chosen for them. They continued to function as apostles through the written scriptures they left behind.

Question #3: Was Paul an apostle?

Yes. Paul was specially selected by the Lord to be an apostle to the Gentiles. According to the OT scriptures there were twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:28). Hence, the Lord chose twelve apostles to minister to these Israelite tribes. The primary focus of the twelve apostles was to preach to the twelve tribes of Israel. (See Galatians 2:7-10). The Lord chose Paul to be an apostle for the Gentile nations.

In order for Paul to be an apostle, the Lord had to appear to him personally:

Acts 26:16

16 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

Notice, to be an apostle one had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord. No one today can be a replacement for an apostle because no one today has seen the resurrected Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:8

8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Paul was the last one to see the resurrected Lord. Hence, there are no more living apostles.

Question #4: Did the apostles perform signs to prove they were apostles?

Yes. The apostles spoke officially for the Lord. To prove they spoke officially, they performed miracles. The Lord realized these apostles had to prove to the world they were official spokesmen on His behalf. People were not required to "just take their word for it."

2 Corinthians 12:12

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Mark 16:20

20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

There were men in the first century claiming to be apostles who were not apostles.

Revelation 2:2

2 "... you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

There is a lesson for us here. If a man claims to be an apostle or a successor of an apostle, he must be tested. If he is proven to be a false apostle, he must be rejected. If the Pope claims to be a successor of the apostle Peter, he must be able to perform the "signs of an apostle." We cannot just "take his word for it." However, the Pope cannot work the confirmatory signs of an apostle. He is not a true successor of any of the apostles.

Question #5: Does Matthew 16:18 teach the church was built upon Peter?

Yes and no. Peter is part of the foundation of the church according to Ephesians 2:19-20. Jesus is the "chief cornerstone" – not Peter. (Read Ephesians 2:19-20 carefully.) All of this means the Lord's church is founded upon what Jesus and His apostles taught.

So, while it is true that Peter was an apostle and taught the Lord's will, it is not true that he was the supreme apostle and became "the head of the church on earth." There is no teaching from Jesus to substantiate this idea. Paul explicitly taught there was no supremacy among the apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:5

5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:10

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

There was not a hierarchy among the apostles. (Read Luke 22:24-26.)

Question #6: Does Matthew 16:18 teach the church cannot become corrupted?

No, not in the sense the Catholic Church uses this passage.

The Catholic Church believes Matthew 16:18 teaches a "mother-church" will be established. They further believe this "mother-church" can never become corrupted because if it did become corrupted, then "the gates of hell will have prevailed against the church" – something Jesus said would never happen.

In response: No passage teaches a "mother-church" concept. There is no "mother-church" to which all other churches must answer. Any congregation (including a congregation in Rome) can become corrupted and have its "candlestick removed" by the Lord.

Revelation 2:5

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.

Question #7: Does John 21:25 teach the Bible alone is insufficient?

No. Read the passage carefully.

John 21:25

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

First: If the world itself could not contain the things that could be written, then oral tradition could do no better. If the Pope began speaking orally as fast as he could speak, it would be impossible to speak in a lifetime the volume of words which would fill the entire world with books.

Second: John has already explained that enough has been revealed and written down to save and guide men.

John 20:30-31

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

It would be interesting to know things about Jesus which were not written down:

- What was Jesus' favorite color?
- What was Jesus' favorite food?
- What did His clothes look like?
- How tall was Jesus?
- How much did Jesus weigh?

It would be interesting to know more about miracles Jesus performed which never were recorded:

- How many lepers did Jesus heal during His lifetime on earth?
- Did He ever heal someone with cancer?
- Did He heal simple aches and pains which people had or just major health problems?

The list is endless. But John 20:30-31 assures Christians that enough information has been revealed in order for men to be saved and live lives pleasing to God. Christians are able to live and die faithfully to God without ever knowing how many lepers were healed. Christians are able to live and die faithfully without ever knowing the Lord's height or weight.

John 20:30-31 and John 21:25 do not negate the fact that all scripture is inspired by God and able to make the man of God "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Question #8: Does 1 Timothy 3:15 teach the Catholic Church produced the Bible and officially interprets it?

No. Catholics argue the church presents the truth and officially interprets it. They use this passage (1 Timothy 3:15) to support their claim. Notice:

1 Timothy 3:15

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Catholic belief in a "mother-church," coupled with their interpretation of "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18), encourages their interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:15. They believe that, if the "mother-church" began teaching error, then hell would overcome the church. Consequently, they believe the church (i.e. the "mother-church") is infallible in its presentation of the truth.

In response, notice the following passage:

Luke 8:11

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

The kingdom is the church (Matthew 16:18-19). The seed which produces the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). As long as the seed exists in the world, then the kingdom will exist in the world – at least in seed form.

The Catholic interpretation makes the church the seed of the scriptures. In other words, the church produces the scriptures. According to Luke 8:11, the opposite is true. The scriptures produce the church and the church is subject to the scriptures. The Catholic Church has this completely backwards.

First Timothy 3:15 is only teaching that the church propagates the truth in the world when it sends forth preachers to preach the written word. The passage in 1 Timothy 3:15 says nothing about being an official teaching magisterium. (See also "Question #15: What problems are created by the concept of a teaching-magisterium?")

Question #9: Does Acts 15 teach "Church Councils" which make church laws?

No.

First: Paul clearly taught he did not go to Jerusalem in order to hear what was correct about circumcision. Read Galatians 2 in its entirety. This entire chapter is rehearsing what occurred in Acts 15. Notice the following excerpt:

Galatians 2:6

6 But from those who seemed to be something — whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man — for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

Paul did not learn one thing new which he did not already know. He did not travel to Jerusalem to learn the truth. He already knew the truth.

Second: Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem because the false teachers causing trouble in Antioch were from Jerusalem. (Read Acts 15:1, 24). Paul and Barnabas were not going up to learn the truth. They were going up to demand that the Jerusalem church discipline the teachers who came to Antioch.

Third: Peter did not issue a "Papal Bull" concerning circumcision. There were other speakers after Peter spoke. Why were there more speakers if Peter uttered an authoritative decree? Furthermore, James was the one who said the following:

Acts 15:19-20

19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,
20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

James was the speaker. He was the one who issued the judgment, and he was not even an apostle.

Fourth: The truth about circumcision and allowing Gentiles into the church was already revealed and decided by God Himself in Acts 10-11. (Read especially

Acts 11:1-18.) Why have a council meeting to decide something which was already decided and revealed by God? This council meeting was a disciplinary meeting to discipline false teachers originating from Jerusalem.

Summary: This was not a council to learn the truth and issue an authoritative decision. This was a meeting to stop false teachers regarding an issue which was already revealed. There is no scriptural precedence for church council meetings to make and issue religious laws.

Question #10: Does 2 Thessalonians 2:15 teach oral traditions in addition to the written scriptures?

No, not "oral traditions" as defined by the Catholic Church.

First: The word of God came originally in oral form, but, little by little, these oral teachings were being inscripturated (written down as scripture). (Review the discussion on 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). The oral teachings of the apostles were identical to the scriptures which they wrote.

2 Corinthians 10:10-11

10 "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

11 Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.

Second: What Paul is now writing and putting into scripture is what he had previously taught orally.

2 Thessalonians 2:5

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

So, the teachings of the apostles began orally, but were eventually inscripturated.

Question #11: Does 2 Timothy 2:2 teach the Bible alone is insufficient?

No.

2 Timothy 2:2

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

First: In order for this passage to prove the NT scriptures are insufficient, it must be demonstrated that what Timothy heard from Paul was different and more than what was recorded in the written scriptures. This is an impossible feat.

Second: The idea that Paul taught one thing orally but something else in writing is false. Paul affirmed that what he taught orally was the same thing he taught in writing. (Read 2 Corinthians 10:10-11.)

Third: The things which Timothy heard were "heard among many witnesses." Yet, the oral traditions of the Catholic Church are known to a select few and shared with the public on very rare occasions. There is no similarity between what Paul referred to in 2 Timothy 2:2 and the oral traditions of the Catholic Church.

Question #12: Does 3 John 13 teach that oral traditions are superior to written revelation?

No.

3 John 13-14

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;

14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

First: This is a self-defeating argument. Supposedly, oral traditions produce what this passage speaks of, but oral traditions today do not give a "face to

face" meeting with one of the twelve original apostles of the Lord. Oral traditions only produce a message which can be verified by neither source nor accuracy.

Second: It must first be proven that the "many things" John wanted to write, but decided not to write, were inspired teachings intended for the edification of the church.

Third: If the "many things" John wrote about were indeed teachings for the edification of the church, it must be proven those "many things" necessary for the church were never written down by any apostle. Perhaps the "many things" are those things which eventually were written down in the Book of Revelation. Perhaps John wanted to rehearse teachings which Gaius had already learned. (Remember, Peter wrote to "remind" Christians of things they had already been taught – things which were written in scripture – 2 Peter 1:12-15.) Until these things are proven, there is no argument to answer.

Fourth: Is it possible for an apostle to say something face-to-face which is not inspired nor infallible? Of course. Even Catholics admit the Pope says things which are non-authoritative, non-inspired, and non-binding. In order to make an argument from 3 John 13-14 about oral traditions, it must be proven John's face-to-face meeting was about authoritative, binding, inspired and non-written subjects. This cannot be proven. There is no argument to answer.

Question #13: When people read the Bible for themselves, does this cause division?

No.

First: Division is wrong. (See John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10.) However, division is not the result of men reading and properly interpreting the Bible for themselves. There are many causes for division, but proper Bible reading and interpretation are never listed as the cause of division.

Second: Some men "did not receive a love for the truth" and "did not believe the truth." The issue here is an attitude problem, not proper Bible reading and interpretation.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Third: There was division in the days of the apostles themselves. The Catholic Church claims that division is solved when there is an official interpreter. Why, then, was there division in the days of the apostles? Division cannot be blamed on proper Bible reading and interpretation when men have attitude problems.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

Fourth: Some divisions are caused by people "twisting" scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). The problem is not proper reading and interpretation, but rather men with attitude problems.

Fifth: Some men do not love the Lord and cause divisions with false doctrine (Romans 16:17-18). Again, the problem is not proper Bible reading and interpretation.

Sixth: Some men seek to "justify themselves" (Luke 10:29). This attitude problem causes division, but the Bible should not be blamed.

Seventh: When Jesus was on earth, there was division among those who followed Him. (Read John 6:60-71; Mark 9:33-34.) Was something wrong with Jesus and His methods, or was the problem a sinful attitude among the people? When there are divisions now, is the problem with the source of authority or with the attitude of the people involved?

Eighth: There are disagreements among Catholics. Many Catholics strongly disagree and speak out against the Church's position on birth control, divorce, abortion, celibacy of the clergy, the response of the church to pedophiles, etc. There are Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, etc. This is not true "unity" as the Bible speaks of unity. (Read 1 Corinthians 1:10.) Jesus wanted unity among His people that was equivalent to the unity He has with His Father (John 17:20-21). Is there disagreement between the Son and the Father over birth control, divorce, abortion, etc.? Therefore, oral tradition does not solve the problem of unity.

Ninth: The Eastern Orthodox Church claims to have its own oral traditions which differ from the Catholic Church's tradition. Which tradition is correct? Why did the Catholic Church divide a thousand years ago if oral traditions prevent division? Why were there heretics teaching false doctrine and leading men away from the Catholic Church if oral traditions prevent division? Why did Martin Luther and all other Protestant Churches form from the Catholic Church if oral traditions prevent division?

Tenth: It is assumed that all 33,000 denominations are "going by the Bible alone." They are not. If they were truly going by what the Bible said, there would not be division. Some people "say and do not do." (See Matthew 23:3.) In other words, some people say they are going by the Bible only, but, in reality, they are not.

Summary: Division is sinful, but the problem is not a Bible-reading-interpreting problem. Men are instructed to "handle correctly the word of God" (2 Timothy 2:15). The solution to division is humble submission to the will of God (Matthew 7:7-8). The solution to division was never a "mother-church"–"teaching-magisterium" solution.

Question #14: Does Matthew 23:1-3 teach there is a "teaching-magisterium"?

No. A "teaching-magisterium" (official teacher) is not being taught here.

Matthew 23:1-3

- 1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,
- 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.
- 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

To "sit in Moses' seat" means to speak "from Moses' position." When men say exactly what Moses said, they are speaking from Moses' place.

Acts 15:21

21 For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

When the Pharisees read to the people from the words of Moses, the people should do exactly what the Pharisees say. However, if Pharisees begin to add oral traditions to what Moses wrote, people should disregard those oral traditions. (Read Matthew 15:1-9.)

Question #15: What problems are created by the concept of a "teaching-magisterium"?

In order for "the church" to be the official interpreter of the scriptures (as taught by Catholics), there must first be the concept of a "mother church" – one church standing officially over all the other churches which all other churches must answer to. Where is this taught?

The word "*church*" is used in three different ways in the scriptures:

- 1) Universal church – meaning Christians all over the world regardless of their location.

Matthew 16:18

18 ... on this rock I will build My church ...

- 2) Local congregation – meaning all Christians in a certain locality.

1 Corinthians 1:2

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, ...

- 3) Assembly – meaning all Christians in a locality assembled together for worship.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

35 ... it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Question: In what sense is "the church" the official interpreter of the scriptures?

- In the universal sense? Are all Christians all over the world the official interpreters of the Bible?
- In the congregational sense? Are all Christians at Prague, Oklahoma the official interpreters of the Bible?
- In the assembled sense? Are all Christians at Seminole, Oklahoma the official interpreters of the Bible when they are assembled together for worship?

The Catholic Church uses the word "church" in a way the apostles never used the term. The Catholic Church uses the word "church" to mean "the mother church in Rome." They do not believe the Catholic Church in Seminole, Oklahoma is the official interpreter of the Bible. They mean the official-mother-church-in-Rome is the official interpreter of the Bible. If there is authority from Jesus to speak like this – it is certainly unwritten – because no scripture even hints at such a concept.

Question #16: Can the common man understand the Bible without a "teaching-magisterium"?

Yes. Refer to the section of this booklet entitled, "*The Apostles Wrote.*" The following passages teach the Bible can be read and understood by common people.

Matthew 13:23

23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

2 Corinthians 1:13

13 For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end.

There is no mention of men needing a "teaching-magisterium" in these passages. These common people at Corinth were encouraged to read, and they were promised they could understand the scripture.

Mark Twain once said, "*It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.*" Twain truly put his finger on the problem. Mankind does not have a problem with understanding. Mankind has

a problem with submission.

Question #17: Can men understand the Bible alike?

Yes. If men understand the scriptures, it will, of necessity, be alike. Imagine the thousands of ways to misunderstand something. Yet, if something is truly understood by two or more people, of necessity, it will be understood alike.

To illustrate, suppose a student said to his teacher, "I understand this problem differently than you. It should not be marked wrong." This would be absurd. There is no such thing as "understanding differently." The student, in this case, simply misunderstands. If two people "understand" the Bible differently, at least one person misunderstands the Bible.

Luke 10:25-28

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

27 So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

Here are two men understanding the Bible alike. In fact, here is one man understanding the Bible like God (because Jesus is God).

Question #18: How can illiterate people know God's will?

In OT days, God's entire law was read publicly every seven years.

Deuteronomy 31:11-13

11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

12 Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they

may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law,
13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

When the law was read publicly, everyone could know God's will. People who could not read could hear the word of God and know His will. People who did not own a copy of the scriptures could know God's will.

It has long been the practice of God's people to gather the people together and read the written scriptures to the people.

Acts 15:30-31

30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

31 When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

Colossians 4:16

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Not everyone had their own set of scriptures. Not everyone could read. However, everyone could hear the scriptures read in the assembly of the church.

Question #19: What about people who do not have their own Bible?

See the answer to Question #18.

Question #20: Does the Bible speak negatively about "oral traditions"?

It certainly does. Some Jews (the Pharisees) believed when Moses received the written law of God, he also received oral instructions which were passed on

from generation to generation (orally). Eventually these "oral traditions" were written down in a book called The Talmud. Jesus often opposed the Pharisees over these oral traditions because the Pharisees elevated oral traditions to the level of written scripture.

Matthew 15:1-9

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" —

6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Men were making the actual word of God (written scripture) void by their use of oral traditions.

In the same way, "oral traditions" of the Catholic Church often make void the word of God. Consider just a few examples:

- *The tradition of praying to images.* This violates the commands against idolatry (1 John 5:21).
- *The veneration of Mary.* This violates the command to worship only God (Matthew 4:10; Revelation 15:4).
- *Calling a priest by the religious title of "father."* This violates the command against religious titles (Matthew 23:5-10).

- *Teaching men to bow in worship to the Pope.* Peter taught men should not bow before him (Acts 10:25-26). If Peter would not allow men bowing to him, how could the Pope (who claims to be Peter's successor) allow such?
- *Forbidding marriage to priests and nuns.* To forbid marriage to people is called a "doctrine of demons" and a "departure from the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1-3).
- *Infant baptism.* This violates the command to baptize only believers (Mark 16:16).
- *Unmarried bishops.* This violates the command that bishops "must be the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2).
- *A separate priesthood.* This violates the teaching that every Christian is a priest of God (1 Peter 2:5, 9).
- *Confession of sins to an "ordained priest."* This violates the teaching that Christians should confess their sins to one another (James 5:16).

The Bible plainly teaches that written scripture is supreme over oral traditions.

1 Corinthians 4:6

6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

Question #21: Are oral traditions accurate and reliable?

No. Remember the game kids play called "Telephone"? One kid whispers something in another's ear. The message goes from one person to the next. The last kid reveals what he heard. The message at the end is totally different from the original message. This illustrates oral traditions.

There is no possible way to verify oral traditions. How would anyone know if an oral tradition has changed or not? The original apostles who supposedly began the oral traditions are not around to verify that they are still being accurately transmitted.

John 21:22-23

22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

The passage above illustrates the accuracy of oral transmission. In this particular instance, oral tradition is being corrected by written revelation.

This is why God put His word into written form. Once something has been written down, there is a way to verify accuracy in transmission.

Question #22: What books should be in the Bible?

First: The Church of Christ and the Catholic Church agree on what constitutes the NT scriptures. Both agree there are 27 books that are inspired – no more and no less.

Even so, there is disagreement about how these books became authoritative. Catholics believe these 27 books became authoritative scriptures because of the Council of Trent (held in AD 1545). Christians believe these 27 books were authoritative because they were written by inspired prophets and inspired apostles. In other words, Christians believe these 27 books did not become inspired because of a council meeting. These books were authoritative because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit – whether anyone believed or accepted them as authoritative or not.

God determined the canon. The church merely discovered it. Vatican I (a "church council meeting" held in 1869) appears to agree:

"... books to be sacred and canonical, not because, having been carefully composed by mere human industry, they were afterward approved by her authority ... but because, having been written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the church herself." (via Geisler, p. 192)

Second: Just because the Catholic Church was involved in preserving the scriptures does not prove the Catholic Church is acceptable with God. Many times God used unsaved people to accomplish His purposes. God's use of unsaved people did not mean they were now acceptable.

- God used Pharaoh of Egypt to bring glory to Himself (Romans 9:17).
- God used Nebuchadnezzar to punish Israel for disobedience (Jeremiah 25:9).
- God used Israel to bring the Savior into the world (Genesis 12:3).

The Jewish people thought that, because God used them, they were automatically saved and acceptable with God. (See Matthew 3:9.) They were not. No Jew will be saved simply and solely because he is a Jew.

Likewise, God is so sovereign that He can use anyone He wishes in order to preserve His written word. Just because God uses someone, this does not mean such a person or church is acceptable with God. The important issue is not whether one was used by God but whether one obeys God.

Matthew 7:21

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Third: The Catholic OT has 12 additions which they declared to be inspired scripture at the Council of Trent (AD 1545).

- There are 7 entire books added to the Catholic Bible (Tobit, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch).
- There is an addition to the Book of Baruch called The Letter of Jeremiah.
- There are additions throughout the Book of Esther.
- There are three additions to the Book of Daniel.

No council of uninspired men (the Council of Trent) have a right to declare uninspired books as canonical (inspired). Furthermore, what did God's people do before the Council of Trent? Were there no scriptures before 1545? Did God's people not know what constituted scripture for 1500 years? If it took a church council to officially declare the canon, why wasn't such a council held in the year AD 100 – right after the apostles died? Better yet, why wasn't a council held in the year 200 BC to approve these Apocryphal writings immediately after they were written? The fact is: Council meetings cannot make any book inspired or uninspired.

Fourth: The Jewish nation was entrusted with the OT scriptures.

Romans 3:1-2

1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?

2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

The Jewish scriptures do not contain the Books of Apocrypha. Neither Jesus nor His apostles ever quoted from the Books of Apocrypha. Hence, there is nothing about these additional books to indicate they were ever accepted by Jesus, His apostles or the Jewish nation living in Palestine.

The Jews were accused by God of many sins. Tampering with the scriptures entrusted to them was never one of those charges.

Fifth: St. Jerome, who translated the Latin Vulgate (the official Bible of the Catholic Church), himself did not believe the Books of Apocrypha were inspired.

St. Jerome, who prepared (with some reluctance) a Latin text of Judith, based his work on a secondary Aramaic text available to him in Palestine ...

(The New American Bible, p. 442).

Jerome separated the Books of Apocrypha from the other canonical books of the OT and relegated them to a "lesser position." Jerome included these books in the Latin Vulgate because of pressure from the church at Rome. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, II:390)

Sixth: Pope Gregory the Great did not consider 1 Maccabees to be canonical. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, II:390)

Seventh: The Council of Carthage included the book sometimes referred to as 3 Esdras. This book was not accepted by the Council of Trent. Which council are people to believe? Which list is correct? The list of books given by the Council of Carthage was accepted by several Popes. Papal letter and decrees written by Pope Innocent I, Gelasius and Hormisdas included material from 3 Esdras. Were these "infallible" Popes mistaken in accepting non-canonical books as authoritative? The Council of Trent removed this book (3 Esdras) from the canon accepted by previous Popes (New Catholic Encyclopedia, II:396-397).

Eighth: The Books of Apocrypha do not claim to be written by any prophet. There are several passages in the Apocrypha which admit no prophet was alive at the time they were written.

1 Maccabees 4:46

46 [So they tore down the altar,] and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them.

1 Maccabees 9:27

27 Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.

1 Maccabees 14:41

41 And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise.

The next passage has the writer himself admitting he is writing on his own authority and "doing the best he can do under the circumstances." In other words, he is admitting he is not being infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit.

2 Maccabees 15:37-38

37 This, then, is how matters turned out with Nicanor. And from that time the city has been in the possession of the Hebrews. So I too will here end my story.

38 If it is well told and to the point, that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do.

Ninth: There are obvious historical mistakes in these books.

Judith 1:1

1 In the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh, in the days of Arphaxad, who ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana ...

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon, not Assyria. He reigned in the city of Babylon, not Nineveh.

Tenth: Some of these books flatly contradict the written scriptures.

Baruch 3:4

4 O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hear now the prayer of the dead of Israel and of the sons of those who sinned before thee, who did not heed the voice of the Lord their God, so that calamities have clung to us.

2 Maccabees 12:44

44 For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead.

The Bible does not teach "praying for the dead." The destiny of the dead cannot be changed. (Read Luke 16:26; 2 Corinthians 5:10.) The dead will be resurrected whether anyone prays for them or not. (Read John 5:28-29.)

Conclusion: For these reasons, the Books of Apocrypha are not to be considered canonical (inspired). While they may be read with some benefit, they are not authoritative in establishing doctrine.

QUESTIONS FOR CATHOLICS

The following questions are humbly asked to our Catholic friends.

- 1) Can people be saved and go to heaven without being members of the Catholic Church?
- 2) Suppose a man and his wife, living all alone, find a Bible. Would it be possible for them to read that Bible, understand it, obey it and be saved? If so, does this mean people could be saved without extra-biblical teachings of the Catholic Church?
- 3) If a church went by the written scriptures alone, would it be the Catholic Church?
- 4) Where did the Lord promise to give successors to Peter or any other apostle?
- 5) What has the Pope done to prove he is truly a successor of the apostles?

- 6) Where did the Lord promise to guide successors of the apostles into "all truth"?
- 7) Where does the Bible teach the "mother-church" concept?
- 8) Do oral traditions "trump" written scriptures? (In other words, are oral traditions higher in authority than written scripture?)
- 9) Of what value are written scriptures if one cannot understand them without the church interpreting them?
- 10) In legal matters, which carries more weight: written documents or oral agreements?
- 11) Is there a list of oral traditions that have been taught by the Catholic Church? Where is the list?
- 12) If the Catholic Church asks for a passage showing a "list of books that belong in the Bible," should the Catholics then be willing to produce a list of oral teachings which should be accepted by God's people?

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

To be saved from past sins, God requires the following steps:

- a) **Belief** in Christ as the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16).
- b) **Repentance of sins** ("turning away from") (Acts 17:30).
- c) **Verbal Confession** of faith in Christ (Romans 10:10).
- d) **Baptism** (immersion) into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16

16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Romans 6:3-4

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Baptism is the "point in time" that God applies the blood of Christ to the sinner's life. The sinner is baptized into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3-4). Sinners were never told to "pray the sinner's prayer" as is commonly believed today (see John 9:31). Only Christians have the privilege of praying for forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9; 2:1 – notice these verses were written to Christians, not sinners). Those who have not been baptized correctly must be rebaptized (see Acts 19:1-5) in order to be saved (1 Peter 3:20-21).

While it may be true that the "thief on the cross" was never baptized (perhaps he may have been—see Matthew 3:5), it must be remembered he was saved while the Old Testament law was still in force (Hebrews 9:16-17). This is exactly what the controversy over the Sabbath day revolves around—which law applies today and what does the Lord require of men today. The Lord's requirement of baptism "for the remission of sins" came after His death and resurrection (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

After baptism, we must continue in "all things" which the Lord "commanded" (Matthew 28:20). We must be careful "lest we fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Even saved Christians can "fall away" (Galatians 5:4), have their name removed from the "book of life" (Revelation 22:19), and suffer a worse fate than "death without mercy" (Hebrews 10:26-29). Christians must "make their calling and election sure" by "giving all diligence" (2 Peter 1:5-11).

OPEN BIBLE STUDY

March 17, 2012

Rhett Brotherton (Catholic Church) presented the position:

The Bible, church tradition and Papal decrees all constitute religious authority.

In other words, the New Testament scriptures do not contain all of God's instructions for Christians today. Christians need the oral traditions and official interpretations of the Catholic Church to fully know God's will for their lives.

George Battey (Church of Christ) presented the position:

The New Testament scriptures alone constitute religious authority today.

In other words, the New Testament scriptures are God's "perfect (complete) law of liberty" (James 1:25). The New Testament scriptures without any addition or subtraction make the Christian "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The above study was conducted at:

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