

IS TRADITION OUR AUTHORITY?

THE PROBLEMS WITH UNWRITTEN TRADITION

"But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

~ Matthew 15:3

1. What Is Tradition

- a. "We have always done it this way", "the historical faith", "church fathers"
- b. The extra-biblical transmission of beliefs and behaviors down through history
- c. RCC Tradition is not scripture, and is in the Church's heart - CCC 78, 81, 82, 113
- d. There is biblical tradition and then there is Tradition outside the Bible
- e. Examples: praying before meals, Sundays, tithing, sinlessness of Mary, holidays

2. Tradition as an Authority

- a. Preaching was the method before the Bible was written – 1Cor 1:21, Rom 10:14
- b. Things preached not in the Bible – John 20:30, 21:35; Acts 1:3, 1 Th 2:13, Gal 1:9
- c. Tradition not always bad, not always avoided, not all untrue, should be considered
- d. Tradition has merits, a voice, and historical authority, but is it divinely ordained?
- e. Authority ~ *def.* Legal power or right to command; have power over; rule; judge.
- f. Authority is derived from the author: the author of truth can only be God
- g. RCC holds that Tradition as equally authoritative as the Bible – CCC 82
- h. If Tradition and the Bible are authorities, then neither one is the final authority
- i. If Tradition is divinely authoritative, the Bible is insufficient, incomplete, and errant

3. Problems with Tradition

- a. An authority is objective, clear, historical, comprehensive, sufficient, unchanging
- b. Identification: A single continuous transmission of unwritten beliefs does not exist
 - i. We have few records. Not all the "fathers" agree, not all the popes agree
- c. Source: we can't be sure of this; adding time does not change where it came from
 - i. A true tradition must come from God; man's tradition is not authoritative
- d. Easily created: Traditions are easy to make, but also "traditions die hard"
- e. Easily changed: like the game 'telephone', the message is quickly lost
 - i. Depends on memory, fragile oral communication, and undefined language
 - ii. The word of God was corrupted in the first generation – 2 Cor 2:17, 4:2
 - iii. They turned from the gospel received of Paul orally - Gal 1:6-9
 - iv. People will listen to what is pleasurable - Titus 1:9-14, 2 Tim 4:4
- f. Subject to hearsay and rumor: Some started by the church – John 21:22-23
- g. Our understanding is fallible: How can our oral Tradition be infallible?
- h. Makes the Bible insufficient: Which Paul says is sufficient – 2 Tim 3:15-17
- i. Adds to the Bible: There are warnings against this -Deu 4:2, Pro 30:5-6, Rev 22:18
- j. Open Canon: It leaves the Bible open for additions (A Pauline truth - Col 1:25)
- k. Tradition does not rightly divide: It is contrary to sound doctrine – 2 Tim 2:7, 2:15
- l. Creates a conflict with the Bible: Requires a third party to decide... mother Church?

4. Conclusion: All true tradition comes from the Bible, not from unwritten Tradition

- a. The infallible authority of God's words in the Bible rules over any Tradition
- b. We evaluate all traditions from the single infallible authority, "is it Biblical?"