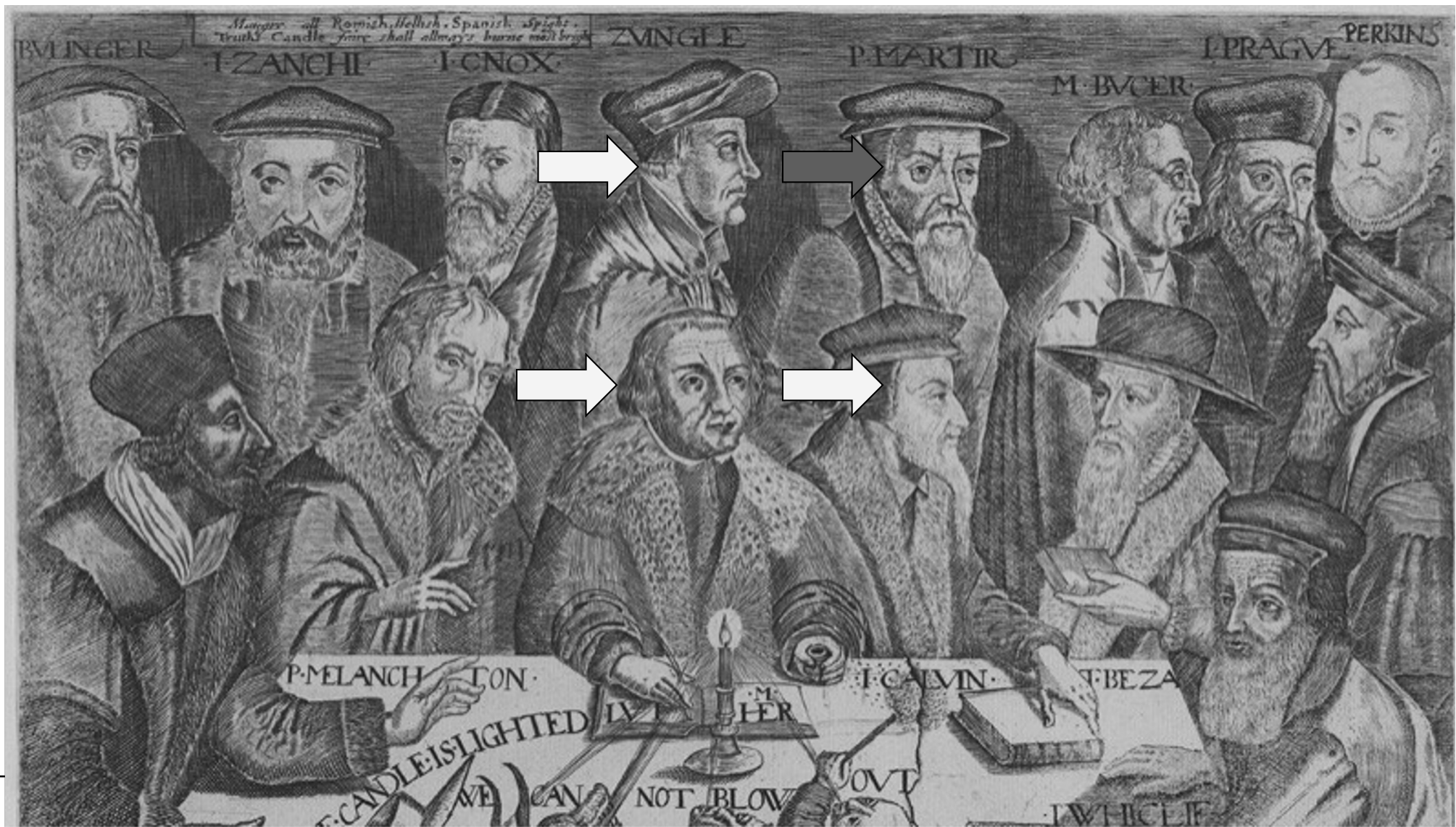


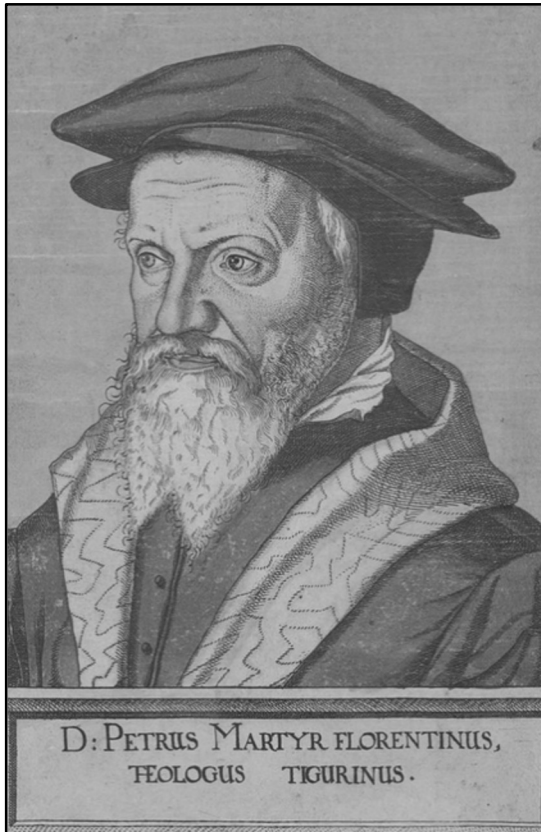


Sola Scriptura and the Roman Catholic Church

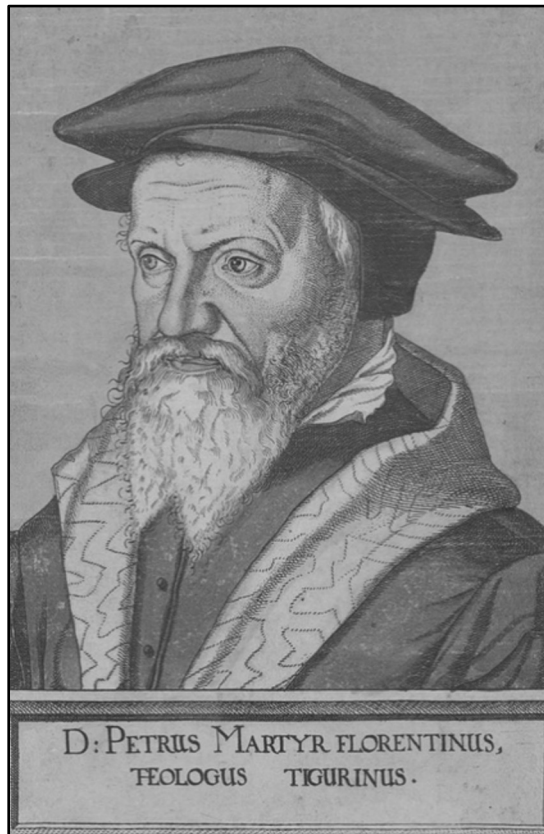
Massimo Mollica

July 26, 2026





"From my youth, while I was still in Italy, I resolved to pursue this one thing above all human arts and institutions: chiefly, to learn and to teach the Sacred Scriptures. And although I myself went astray for a time (since the fog, the darkness, and the night of the Papacy deceive many), nevertheless I did not cease, in that dark prison, as best I could under those circumstances, both to learn and to teach the Sacred Scriptures." (Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Più dolce del miele*, p. 7).



"Believe me, in the human condition there is no greater misery than being ignorant of the Sacred Scriptures, and conversely, there is no greater blessedness than knowing them" (Vermigli, p. 23).

SAFEGUARDING THE BIBLICAL GOSPEL.

1. *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone) (Formal cause of the Reformation)
2. *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone) (Material cause of the Reformation)
3. *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone)
4. *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone)
5. *Soli Deo Gloria* (Glory to God Alone)

OVERVIEW OF THE APOSTASY OF THE RCC

5 phrases to summarize the Roman system.

1. *Scripture + Tradition + Church Authority*

2. *Faith + Works*

3. *Grace + Merit*

4. *Christ + Other Mediators*

5. *Worship of God + Veneration of Mary, saints, and icons*

WHY THIS STUDY?



- To provide a resource in light of aggressive apologetics from Roman Catholic apologists in the USA
- In evangelism, the question of authority is central
- To equip you how to think through this issue as dealing with the Roman Catholic Church requires some depth of knowledge of Scripture, Theology, and History

SEMINAR OVERVIEW

1. Define and defend *Sola Scriptura*
2. Explain the Roman Catholic position
3. Examine the Roman Catholic position on Tradition and Papal Primacy
4. Provide help in speaking with Roman Catholics

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of classical architectural columns, likely from a church or cathedral. The columns are fluted and have ornate capitals. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark, moody tone. A thin black rectangular border is superimposed over the center of the image, framing the text.

Sola Scriptura

Scripture Alone

THE MASTER'S SEMINARY STATEMENT

ARTICLE XXXII: Scripture and Christian Tradition

We affirm the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura*, that Scripture alone is the ultimate, absolute, and infallible rule for faith and practice—the sole norming norm which is not normed.

We deny the mischaracterization of *sola Scriptura* that denies the existence of legitimate subordinate norms which are themselves normed by Scripture.

– The Master's Seminary Journal, Spring 2026, 37:1, p. 181

WHAT IS SOLA SCRIPTURA?

1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

"The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience" (1.1)

"The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved." (1.10)

WHAT IS SOLA SCRIPTURA?

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION

- *Sola Scriptura* means that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.
 - Scripture is the *norma normans* (the norming norm)
- Since Scripture alone is incapable of erring, its authority is uniquely binding.
- Later articulations of church doctrine, whether from councils and confessions, popes, or other church groups (like the Magisterium) must stand under and be corrected by the Scriptures.
 - Councils and confessions are *norma normata* (norms that are normed)
- Therefore, Scripture alone is the final and only infallible rule capable of correcting deviations that develop over history or intrude into the Church.

SOME CLARIFICATIONS

- **SS** does not deny rightful authority of the church to teach doctrine or make judgments, but denies the necessity and existence of an infallible Magisterium or teaching office.

1 Timothy 3:15: *the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth*

- **SS** does not deny that the prophets and apostles did not at times orally speak the Word of God, but, being lost to history, what is necessary for the people of God is in the written Word.
- **SS** does not mean everyone is free to interpret Scripture how they want in opposition to formulated historic Christian doctrine.

SOME CLARIFICATIONS

- **SS** does not deny every tradition (only the Tridentine concept), but calls for them to be subjected and corrected by Scripture.
- **SS** does not deny the guidance of both the Holy Spirit in history and the teaching gifts of qualified men who subject themselves to Scripture

What is the unique nature of Scripture?

- It is God-breathed.

2 Timothy 3:16: *All Scripture is inspired by God*

- It is Holy Spirit produced.

2 Peter 1:21: *no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

Scriptures Unique Qualities

Psalm 19:7-8: The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalm 119:97-100: O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts.

What is the function of Scripture?

- It gives wisdom unto salvation and forms a sufficient doctrinal and moral basis for the formation of the believer and the minister.

2 Timothy 3:15-17: *the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

- It is a superior guide this side of the second coming.

2 Peter 1:19: *So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

- It provides the authoritative norm within the Scriptures themselves to examine doctrine ("It is written", see also Mark 7:1-13)

WHY SOLA SCRIPTURA?

- The Bible is the only infallible authority for doctrine and practice because:
 - The Bible is the only extant divine revelation that is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21)
 - The Bible is sufficient for all things needed for man's salvation and godliness, thus nothing needs to be added by way of new divine revelation (Gal 1:8-9; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3-4; Jude 3)
- The authoritative Scriptures are the 39 books of the OT and 27 books of the NT and exclude the Apocrypha

Sufficiency demonstrated

What Scripture is: *Incorruptible* (1 Pet. 1:23), *faithful* (Ps. 119:86, 138), *sure* (Ps. 111:7), *pure* (Ps. 12:6), *perfect* (Ps. 19:7), *proven* (Ps. 18:30), *profitable* (2 Tim. 3:16), *truth* (Ps. 119:142, 160; John 17:17), *stands fast* (Ps. 111:8), *forever settled in heaven* (Ps. 119:89), *abides forever* (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:23-25), and *measures the words of men* (Isa. 8:20; Acts 17:11).

What Scripture does: It *regenerates* (1 Pet. 1:23), *converts* (Ps. 19:7), *makes wise unto salvation* (2 Tim. 3:15), *is able to save souls* (James 1:23), *persuades sinners to repent* (Luke 16:29, 31), *makes wise the simple* (Ps. 19:7), *imparts knowledge* (Prov. 22:20-21), *cannot be broken* (John 10:35), *does not return void* (Isa. 55:11), *accomplishes God's will* (Isa. 55:11), and *sanctifies believers* (John 17:17)

Responding to USA RC Apologists

- They say that the “Word of God” is more broad and includes the oral preaching of the prophets, apostles, and tradition.
- Response:
 - These descriptions are contained in the written Word (“sacred writings” and “Scripture”) and not applied to Tradition.
 - There are no examples of divine revelation outside of the Scripture.
 - Outside of apostolic preaching, now “inscripturated”, Church history shows no evidence that there was another source for the Word of God in line with RC dogmas and teaching.

RESPONSE TO “SOLA SCRIPTURA IS NOT IN THE BIBLE”

- If Scripture's nature is unique, then so too is its authority.
- The Scripture's do not hint at any other source for God-breathed revelation or of future developments.
 - It is normal to judge the later uncertain traditions of man (even if they claim to have angelic or apostolic origin) by what we know to be certainly apostolic. (Gal 1:8).
- In the absence of other God-inspired texts, *Sola Scriptura* is a reasonable conclusion from the both the nature of the Scripture and the function of the Scripture. What else carries the weight of God's Word?
- The burden of proof is on the Roman Catholic Church to show why “that which isn't the speech of God to have equal authority to that which is the speech of God” (Ortlund, *What It Means To Be Protestant*, p. 78)

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of classical architectural columns, likely from a Roman or Greek temple. The columns are fluted and have papyrus capitals. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark, moody tone. A thin black rectangular border is centered on the slide, framing the title text.

The Roman Catholic Position

TWO-SOURCES OF AUTHORITY?

- A view emerges in the 12th century that says the Apostles did not commit everything to Scripture. (Mathison, p. 49-81)
- It is said that the gospels contain the words and works of Christ during His life, but not what Christ taught between His resurrection and ascension to heaven.
- This extra-biblical apostolic tradition is passed down to complement the Scriptures as the second source of revelation.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, SESSION 4 (APRIL 8, 1546)

"This [Gospel] ... Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promulgated first with His own mouth and then commanded it to be preached by His Apostles to every creature as the source at once of all saving truth and rules of conduct. It also clearly perceives that these truths and rules are contained *in the written books and in the unwritten traditions*, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand ..."

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, SESSION 4 (APRIL 8, 1546)

"... Following, then, the examples of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with a feeling of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; *also the traditions*, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession"

- Decree concerning the Canonical Scriptures

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (NOVEMBER 18, 1965)

Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

9. Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity ...

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (NOVEMBER 18, 1965)

Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence ...

10. ... But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ ...

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (NOVEMBER 18, 1965)

Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

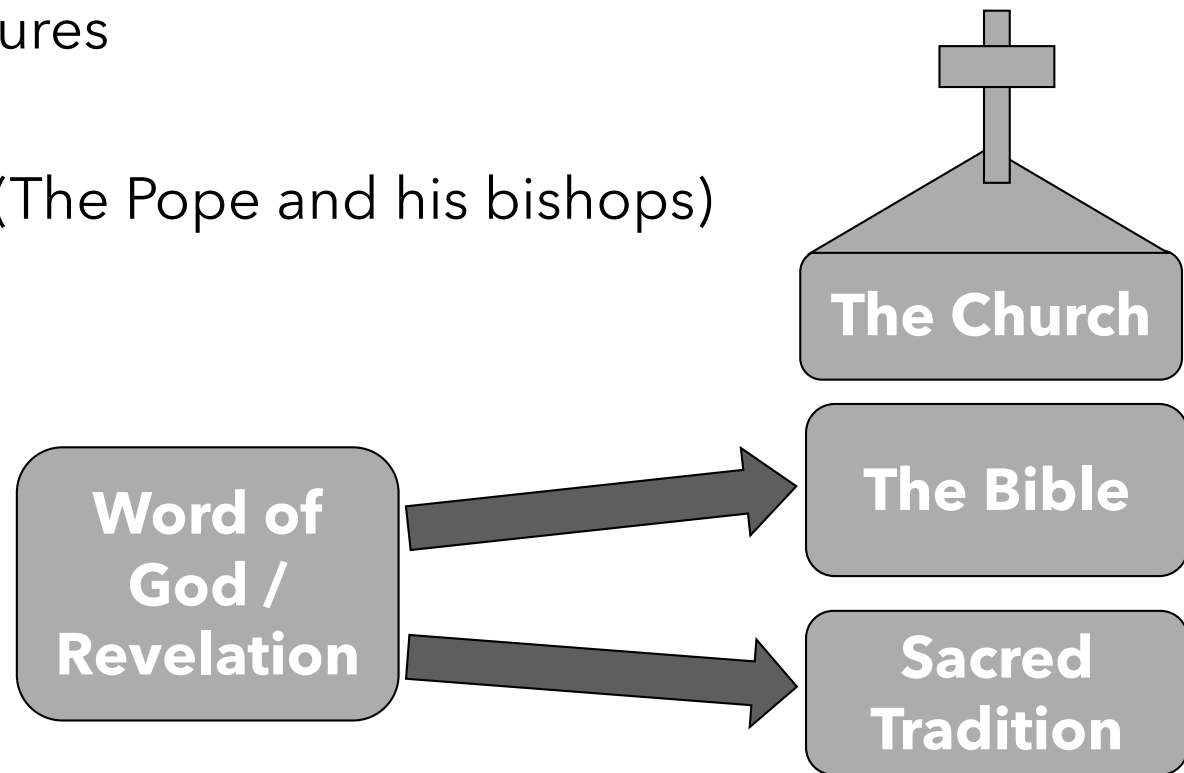
12. For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE?

"65 ... There will be no further Revelation ... 66 "The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sec. 65-66)

A TRIUMVIRATE OF AUTHORITY

- The Sacred Scriptures
- Sacred Tradition
- The Magisterium (The Pope and his bishops)



The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of classical architectural columns, likely from a Greek or Roman temple. The columns are fluted and have papyrus capitals. They are arranged in a row, receding into the distance, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

Analyzing “Sacred Tradition” as a Second Source

SOME RC TRADITIONS

- The primacy of Rome
- Papal Infallibility
- Purgatory
- Seven Sacraments
- Indulgences and the Treasury of Merit
- The Perpetual Virginity of Mary
- The Marian Dogma's (Immaculate Conception & Assumption)
- Prayers to the Saints
- Icons and Relics
- Apocryphal books
- The Sacrifice of the Mass

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO TRADITION

Mark 7:1-13 (cf. Matthew 15:1-9)

- Some would argue that these texts are not applicable to the current debate because it only is speaking of human traditions, not divine traditions.
- However, the Pharisee's, sitting in the seat of Moses (Matt. 23:3), did not consider their tradition as human in origin, but divine as is implicit in the following observations:
 - They thought they were "doctrines" from God (7:7), but they were deceived as they were from man.
 - They were hypocrites because they thought they were serving God through their tradition (7:6).

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO TRADITION

Mark 7:1-13 (cf. Matthew 15:1-9)

- Pharisaical tradition claimed to be oral law passed down through succession from Sinai.

F.F. Bruce: "As time went on the claim was made that this oral law, like the written law itself, was received by Moses on Sinai, and it was accorded much the same authority. From Moses, it was further claimed, it was handed down through a succession of tradents" (cited by Keith Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, p. 173)

- Jesus sharply rebukes This is a two-source theory of the Word of God that is strikingly parallel to the RCC view of Sacred Tradition.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO TRADITION

Mark 7:1-13 (cf. Matthew 15:1-9)

- There is inherent danger in the insistence on transmitted tradition. It leads to vain worship from distant hearts (7:6-7), neglect of God's commandment (7:8), expertise in setting aside God's commandment (7:9), invalidation of God's word altogether by the transmission of tradition (7:13), and transgression of God's commandment (Matt. 15:3).
- **Ortlund:** "This error—the usurping of divine authority—is not unique to the Pharisees. It will be a perennial temptation for any group that has historical ties to a genuine work of God" (p. 81)
- By implication, any form of "Christianity" would be most susceptible to this, as it is seen codified in the RCC's "Sacred Tradition"

OTHER NT REFERENCES TO TRADITION

- **1 Corinthians 11:2:** Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.
- **2 Thessalonians 2:15:** So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.
- Adherence to apostolic oral teaching in the 1st century is to be expected. We are living 2000 years later.
- In context, these are references to the essential and already firmly established truths of the faith and the gospel.
- They are not references to later developments in RCC dogma (Roman Primacy, Sacramental Theology, Marian Dogmas, or Papal Infallibility).

MEASURING LATER “REVELATION”

- **Galatians 1:8-9** *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*
- **Jude 3** *contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*
- **Acts 17:11** *“for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”*

OTHER POSSIBILITIES OUTSIDE OF THE BIBLE?

- Oral apostolic teaching

Gal 1:8: But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

1 Cor 15:1-2: Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

1 Thess 2:13: For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

WHAT IS THIS “ORAL” TRADITION?

- It's easy for people to assume “tradition” is unwritten doctrines orally handed down.

Mathison: “A remarkable scholarly consensus shows that in the early church, Scripture and Tradition were in no way mutually exclusive concepts because they coincided with each other completely” (p. 19).

ORAL APOSTOLIC TEACHING AND TRADITION?

- We must distinguish between infallible oral apostolic preaching and the fallible transmission of its content from one generation to another.
- Even in the early church among the fathers, there were contradicting views on what the apostles actually taught. (see Ortlund, p. 81).
 - 2nd century: Dispute on the date of Easter both claiming apostolic tradition
 - Ireneus (early 2nd century) claimed apostolic tradition was that Jesus died as a middle aged-man
- Therefore, "This does not mean patristic testimony to apostolic teaching is not valuable, but it certainly entails that it is not an *infallible rule* for the church" (Ortlund, p. 82).

THE EARLY THREAT OF GNOSTICISM

- **Ireneaus of Lyons**, a disciple of Polycarp who knew the apostle John, wrote *Against Heresies* in about 180 A.D. to battle against Gnosticism.
- Various parallels can be drawn between Gnosticism and Roman Catholicism:
 - They used Scripture, but also claimed that there were secret unwritten apostolic oral traditions which contained redeeming knowledge.
 - When confronted, they claimed the Scriptures were ambiguous.
 - The truth of Scripture had to be extracted by those who knew the tradition.
 - The truth of Scripture must be delivered by a *viva vox* (living voice)

– see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.2.1

THE EARLY THREAT OF GNOSTICISM

- To refute the Gnostics, Ireneaus appealed to the *regula fidei* or the “rule of faith”, which was recited by new believers prior to baptism.
- This *regula fidei* was the public apostolic tradition, even where written Scriptures had not yet arrived.

THE ANCIENT VIEW OF TRADITION

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.4.3, ~180 A.D.

"To which course many nations of those barbarians who believe in Christ do assent, having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink, and, carefully preserving the ancient tradition, believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God . . .

THE ANCIENT VIEW OF TRADITION

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.4.3, ~180 A.D.

“. . . who, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendour, shall come in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent”

THE *REGULA FIDEI*/ RULE OF FAITH

- Catholic apologists point to this “rule of faith” to argue for an independent supplemental source of tradition. But, this *regula fidei* does not contain any of the Roman Catholic doctrines/traditions
- It provided a simple summary of apostolic doctrine to test the truthfulness of errant teaching and deviant interpretation of Scripture.
- At times it is viewed as the interpretation of Scripture and at times it is an exact summary of Scripture (Mathison, p. 24).
- This public tradition is “inscripturated” in the canonical books, thus it is not demonstrably independent or supplemental.

THE ANCIENT VIEW OF TRADITION

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1, ~180 A.D.

"We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith."

MARTIN CHEMNITZ ON “TRADITION”

1. Teachings orally delivered by Christ and the apostles and then committed to writing (2 Thess 2:15; 1 Cor 15:1-3)
2. The witness of the church to the faithful transmission of the canonical books.
3. Patristic appeals to apostolic tradition in the churches to refute heresy and confirm doctrines in Scripture.
4. Ancient principles of Bible interpretation.
5. Doctrines rightly deduced from clear teaching of Scripture (The Trinity and the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father)

MARTIN CHEMNITZ ON “TRADITION”

6. The collective consensus of the the fathers, though always subordinate to Scripture.
7. Traditions that are not moral or doctrinal, like rites and customs, that are not found in Scripture.
8. *Papal doctrines that lack clear Scriptural support which are put on par with Scripture, but commanded to be revered and venerated.*

MARTIN CHEMNITZ ON TRADITION

Chemnitz: "For by heaping up many dissimilar statements from the most ancient writings the papalists gain for their disputation a certain appearance and cloak, or rather a deceitful disguise . . . They whitewash all traditions, which are not of one kind ... And I judge that there is no simpler way by which this whole disputation may be explained and the objections of the papalists solidly refuted than if the traditions of which the ancient speak in glowing terms are distinguished from those for which the papalists fight" (*Examination of the Council of Trent*, 1:272)

THE ANCIENT VIEW OF TRADITION

"Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense "Catholic," ... This rule we shall observe if we follow **universality, antiquity, consent** ... "

- Vincent of Lérins, 5th century monk in Western Europe, *The Commonitory*, 2.6

THE UNANIMOUS CONSENT OF THE FATHERS

"no one relying on his own judgment shall, in matters of faith and morals ... presume to interpret them contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge of their true sense and interpretation ... or **even contrary to the unanimous teaching of the [church) Fathers.**"

- The Council of Trent, Session IV, *Decree concerning the edition and use of the sacred books*, April, 1546

"Likewise I accept sacred scripture according to that sense which holy mother church held and hold ... nor will I ever receive and interpret them **except according to the unanimous consent of the fathers.**"

- *Decrees of the First Vatican Council*, Session 2, January 6, 1870

“[Sola Scriptura] had no defender for the first thirteen centuries of the Church. It does not belong to historic Christianity”

Philip Blosser, cited by William Webster, *Holy Scripture: The Ground and Pillar of Our Faith*, Vol 2, p. 15

IRENAEUS AGAINST THE Gnostics, ~180 A.D.

Against Heresies, 1.8.1.

"Such, then, is their system, which neither the prophets announced, nor the Lord taught, nor the apostles delivered, but of which they boast that beyond all others they have a perfect knowledge. They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they strive to weave ropes of sand, while they endeavour to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support. In doing so, however, they disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth.

EARLY TESTIMONY TO *SOLA SCRIPTURA*

Tertullian: "Let them [the heretics] support their inquiries from the Scriptures alone" (~200 A.D., *On the Resurrection*, 3)

Hippolytus: "There is, brethren, one God, the knowledge of whom we gain from the Holy Scriptures, and from no other source ... so all of us who wish to practise piety will be unable to learn its practice from any other quarter than the oracles of God" (200-235 A.D., *Against the Heresy of One Noetus*, 9)

AUGUSTINE, EARLY 400'S A.D.

***The City of God*, 11.3**

"This Mediator, having spoken what He judged sufficient first by the prophets, then by His own lips, and afterwards by the apostles, has besides produced the Scripture which is called canonical, which has paramount authority, and to which we yield assent in all matters of which we ought not to be ignorant."

AUGUSTINE, EARLY 400'S A.D.

Contra Cresconium, 2.31-32 (see Webster, *The Church of Rome*, p. 25)

"For the Holy Scripture fixes the rule for our doctrine, lest we be wiser than we ought. Therefore I not should teach you anything else except to expound to you the words of the Teacher ... From among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith and the manner of life"

CONCLUSION ABOUT HISTORY

William Webster: *"The opinion of the fathers and theologians throughout the history of the Church and up to the Reformation was overwhelmingly in favor of the Reformation principle of sola Scriptura and antithetical to the position of the Council of Trent. Contrary to claims by Roman Catholic apologists, the principle of sola Scriptura is not only biblical, it is historical. It is Roman Catholic teaching, as defined by the Council of Trent, which is, in fact, unhistorical"* (Holy Scripture, vol. 2, p. 93)

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of classical architectural columns, likely from a cathedral or church. The columns are fluted and have papyrus capitals. They are arranged in a row, receding into the distance, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

Papal Primacy, Succession and Infallibility?

VATICAN I AND PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

Pastor Aeternus (July 18, **1870**)

"we teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman pontiff speaks EX CATHEDRA, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, irreformable."

DOES MATTHEW 16 SUPPORT ROMAN PRIMACY?

Matthew 16:18-19: "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Interpretive Options:

- Jesus is the Rock
- Peter's confession of faith is the Rock
- Peter is the Rock

DOES MATTHEW 16 SUPPORT ROMAN PRIMACY?

- Before the Reformation, this text was rarely ever used to support papal claims. Most viewed it as a reference to Christ, some to Peter's confession, few as Peter (Mathison, p. 185).
- If the RCC interpretation is true:
 - the majority of key leaders in the early church history missed this truth.
 - Peter's successor (68 A.D.) would have had authority over the Apostle John who was still alive.

DOES MATTHEW 16 SUPPORT ROMAN PRIMACY?

- Even if it is Peter, the text says nothing of apostolic succession and nothing about Rome, like other texts that discuss Peter's ministry.
- It is the gospel message that either binds or looses men and it is heaven that acts first.
- In Matthew 18, all the apostles are given the same authority.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON ROMAN PRIMACY?

- In Acts 15:6-29, a proof text used by the RCC, Peter gives the initial speech at the Jerusalem Council, but James gives the last word on the question in discussion.
- The NT clearly describes church leadership in detail (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 12:27-31; 1 Tim 3, Titus 1) and doesn't even hint at a Roman Magisterium or Papal Primacy.

PROBLEMS WITH INFALLIBLE MECHANISMS

- It is foreign to both the OT and NT

Ortlund: "Its difficult to even *argue* about papal succession from the New Testament because its like trying to argue whether Pluto should be a planet or who shot J.F.K. based on the New Testament" (p. 104)

Ortlund: "However carefully the New Testament is scrutinized, not one word will be discovered about infallible authority being vested into an ongoing post-apostolic function in the church. Yet if the church did possess such a function, wouldn't this be *the single most important fact* for the New Testament" (p. 83)

- Infallible mechanisms still need to be interpreted, leading to an infinite regress.

PROBLEMS WITH INFALLIBLE MECHANISMS

- There is no trace of them in the ancient church, but develops in the middle ages (not universal or ancient, thus not catholic).

William Webster: "The [ecumenical] councils, in fact, always operated independently of Rome and with an authority derived by the Holy Spirit and not in any sense dependent on Roman approval" (*The Church of Rome*, p. 60)

- It multiplies confusion through more documents that need to be interpreted (no clarity)
- "The church is ultimately untethered from accountability to the inspired Word of God" (Ortlund, p. 95)

The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of classical architectural columns, likely from a Roman or Greek temple. The columns are fluted and have papyrus capitals. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark, moody tone. A thin black rectangular border is centered on the slide, framing the title text.

Speaking with Roman Catholics

SOME SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- Why doesn't the Bible, which we both agree comes from God, even hint at Sacred Tradition, the Magisterium, or the Pope if it is so foundational to Christianity?
- If oral apostolic teaching is "inscripturated" like the apostles and early church fathers say and if Roman primacy and infallible are not historically and universally held in the ancient church, what other rule does the church have that is infallible?
- How can you test if later historical developments come from God or not? Shouldn't we test the uncertain by the certain?
- Even if infallibility was granted to Councils, Magisterium and Pope, do see a qualitative difference between them and the Bible? Are they God-breathed?

SOME SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- Sacred Tradition and Magisterial Teaching are spread throughout thousands of pages of documents most of which are inaccessible and need study, interpretation, and clarification, in light of their contradictions and obscurity.
 - What is the authority for interpreting Church?
 - Doesn't adding more documents and more magisterial teaching just multiply the confusion over interpreting doctrine?
 - Isn't it better to focus on one book, the Bible?

SOME SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- What happens if a doctrine contradicts Scripture? What do you bind your conscience to?
- Are the men in the Magisterium and the pope Himself infallible? Is it safe for your soul to trust the authority of the Magisterium that is comprised of fallible men?
- Would you go back to Scripture to determine the meaning God intended without bringing other concepts from the outside?

CONCLUSION

WHY DOES THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH HEAR THE WORD OF GOD WHEN GOD IS NOT SPEAKING? WHOSE VOICE IS IT?

CONCLUSION

1 Timothy 4:1-3 *But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons*

MATTHEW 7:24-27

Jesus Christ: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."