

The Authority of Rome

December 21, 2008

The Council of Trent – Fourth Session (1546)

- The sacred and holy, ecumenical, and general Synod of Trent,—lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the Same three legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein,—keeping this always in view, that, errors being removed, the purity itself of the Gospel be preserved in the Church; which (Gospel), before promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and **seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and 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 even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand;** (the Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament—seeing that one God is the author of both—as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, **as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost,** and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.
- [List of canonical books, including the Apocrypha] ... But if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.
- Moreover, the same sacred and holy Synod,—considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin editions, now in circulation, of the sacred books, is to be held as authentic,—ordains and declares, that the **said old and vulgate edition, which, by the lengthened usage of so many years, has been approved of in the Church, be, in public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions, held as authentic;** and that no one is to dare, or presume to reject it under any pretext whatever.
- Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that **no one, relying on his own skill, shall,—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine,—wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,—hath held and doth hold;** or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.

The Bible

- The Roman Catholic church has a high view of Scripture; it is authoritative and “dictated” by God
- The Roman Catholic church includes the Apocryphal books as canonical and deserving equal veneration with the other books of the Old and New Testaments
- The Roman Catholic church claims that the Scripture received its authority in the first place from the Church itself through the early councils of the Church which assembled and authorized the canon
 - However, the canon was written, completed, and accepted centuries before the early church councils
 - Furthermore, the early church councils did not “determine” Scripture; they merely recognized and “received” what was already clearly Scripture
- The Roman Catholic church argues that Scripture needs to be interpreted according to the traditions of the church
- The authoritative translation of the Scriptures is the Latin Vulgate, translated by Jerome around 400 AD
 - The Vulgate contains many translation errors confirmed by modern scholarship
 - Roman Catholic Bibles in the vernacular are based on the Vulgate and are thus a translation of a translation
 - Roman Catholic Bibles contain notes (like Protestant Bibles) explaining the text
- The Roman Catholic church has had a history of hiding or keeping the Word of God away from people
 - Use of the Latin Vulgate instead of translations in the vernacular
 - Forbids private interpretation; instead rely on official interpretation of the church

Tradition

- Alongside of the Bible, the Roman Catholic church upholds tradition as a source of authority
- There is an “unwritten word” of Christ and the apostles, handed down as oral tradition from generation to generation by word of mouth
- Extrabiblical sources of authority include the Apocrypha, church councils, writings of the church fathers, papal encyclicals and pronouncements, etc.

God Alone – *Sola Scriptura*

- Traditions are the inventions of men and as such are not infallible; many of the church fathers and early traditions contradict one another
- Most of the prominent doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic church are derived from tradition, not Scripture: *e.g.*, purgatory, the priesthood, the mass, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, indulgences, penance, worship of the Virgin Mary, iconography, relics, holy water, rosary beads, celibacy of priests and nuns, the papacy itself
- Since the Council of Trent (1546), the Roman Catholic church has emphasized the equal authority of Scripture and tradition

The Roman Catholic Church

- The Roman Catholic church is in effect the highest authority, since it determines what tradition is and how the Bible is to be interpreted
- Since 1870, the infallibility of the pope has been official doctrine; however, this belief has been present centuries before, even before the time of Luther and the Reformation
- The final seat of authority is not the Bible alone, but the Bible plus the traditions as interpreted by the Roman Catholic church; in essence, the pope holds the final seat of authority as the head of the Roman Catholic church