

In the Midst of Deceit

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What causes men to pledge loyalty to the Church of Rome? What draws the affection of their hearts even to the casting off of reason? What blinds them so that they elevate the authority of man above the Word of God, and then defend an illogical submission to unscriptural traditions? And what motivates them to declare this organization to be the true church of Christ, when it bears no resemblance to the true? In short, what compels them to betray Christ and, by this act, believe they are doing God's will?

[W]e are actually required to believe and obey *everything* the Church teaches regarding *faith and morals*, whether it is unchangeable truths of the faith that have been defined by the Magisterium¹ as divinely revealed by God, such as the doctrine on the Trinity what we call “big T” Tradition; or changing matters of discipline and practice, such as liturgical guidelines or ascetical practices, like how much fasting we do during Lent, what we call “small t” tradition.²

Some converts to Catholicism defend Rome with more passion than they had previously defended the Word of God. And this newfound affection causes them to wax eloquent with lofty declarations expressing their devotion:

I think, as Catholic Christians and even as Bible Christians who are still asking questions about the Catholic faith, recognize from Scripture that there is a certain splendor about

¹ The Papal teaching authority

² www.historicalchristian.com; What Are We to Believe? A Question from a Protestant Friend on the Magisterium

the Church that calls for deep love and strong commitment. **But what is the nature behind the splendor?**

What is the mystery that lies behind the Church? Not just behind the Church, but that which lies within the Church. For the next few minutes we'd like to explore that theme, "The Splendor of the Church," and allow the Holy Spirit to show us again what many of us have received from birth in a sense, what all of us have come to appreciate to some extent or you wouldn't be here. Let us take a look together at the splendor of the Church.³

Is this so-called "splendor" of the Catholic Church, in truth the splendor of Christ's church? Equally important, "what is the nature," the true nature, of the Church of Rome? The casual distinction that Hahn makes between "Catholic Christians" and "Bible Christians" is highly significant. Not only do Catholics need more than the Bible to prop up their unwieldy faith, the truth is they desperately require something *other than* the Bible:

The Deposit of Faith of the Catholic Church consists of Holy Scripture, **Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium** in conjunction with our holy Father the Pope. You can equate it to a three legged stool, with each leg having its own specific function. This three-legged stool is also firmly implanted on the solid rock of the Catholic Church. See Matt 16:18, John 1:42, Eph 2:20, 1 Pet 2:4-8⁴

This claim of a "three legged stool" is only necessary for their contentions concerning the magisterium and tradition. It is mere stuff and nonsense. The Word of God is like its Author, a rock, or a pillar that needs no additional support. However, since much of Rome's doctrine is foreign, and even opposed to the scriptures, they must disparage faith in the Word of God alone. For Rome, the Bible is only necessary to provide a veneer of validity to cover their pretense at Christianity. "Pope John Paul II stated:

The "supreme rule of her faith" derives from the unity which the Spirit has created between Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church in a reciprocity which means that none of the three can survive without the others (n. 55c)."⁵

The facts of history from the Waldenses to the Reformation to almost four hundred years of the Authorized Version, more than attests to the fact that Rome is wrong, and that Scripture survives,

³ The Splendor of the Catholic Church, Scott Hahn, "Catholic-pages.com" (Emphasis mine – ed.)

⁴ Catholic Answers.com; (I left the Bible references exactly as they were, because none of them supports the contentions of this quote; emphasis is mine – ed.)

⁵ Obedience to The Magisterium and the Responsibility of the Bishop Toward the Laity; Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke, D.D., J.C.D. Prefect, Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura International Director, Marian Catechist Apostolate. (Whew!!! There's a mouthful; and so humble too.)

even flourishes nicely without and in spite of, Rome's interference. There is **no unity** between Rome's Tradition and Scripture: *Can two walk together except they be agreed?*⁶

YE WILL NOT COME UNTO ME

As any sect would, Rome has paraded her recent converts with satisfaction, and they in turn have embraced without question her dogmas and authority. To these converts, it was the weakness of Scripture; its inability to stand on its own, or their own mortal senses apparently contradicting it; it was Scripture's flaws and failures that drove them to arms of Papal Rome. In their opinion, just as Jesus Christ alone cannot or will not *save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him*⁷ (hence the need for a "co-Redemptrix," indulgences, dead saints, scapulars, etc.), in like manner the Scripture alone cannot or will not make one *wise unto salvation*⁸ without the heavy hand of "Sacred Tradition" vigorously applied. These converts have satisfied themselves that Scripture cannot be trusted explicitly, but the fallible magisterium and faulty traditions of the Papal Rome can! Roman Catholic, Philip St. Romain, noted some "recognizable characteristics" of "Christians who look to Scripture alone for guidance as how to live a Christian life":

1. Belief in creationism: a theory of creation, holding that matter, the various forms of life, and the world were created by a transcendent God out of nothing. Some...even believe that creation was accomplished in a six-day period...[They] disregard, or else hold in suspicion, all scientific support for the theory of evolution.
2. Belief in justification by faith alone...
5. Disregard for devotions to Mary and the other saints.
6. Disregard for all Catholic beliefs rooted in sacred Tradition.⁹

Romain, in typical fashion, rejects the authority of Scripture and accepts the authority of man in everything from evolution to "sacred Tradition." The Bible states that God created all things; Darwin retorts that God did not, and Romain believes man. The Bible states that Jesus Christ saves sinners; Rome replies that He cannot, and once again Romain believes man. For a Catholic, the Bible is at best, half a loaf of bread. It is insufficient to meet man's need. The temptation of man in the Garden was at its root a question of obedience, but that submission rested on faith in God's Word; "*Yea, hath God said...?*"¹⁰ Man was given a choice, whom would he believe? and as a consequence of that trust, who would he obey? The question raised by the serpent, and by Darwin and Rome, is simple, "Can you believe God?" And the answer they furnish is implied, if not directly stated, "No." Yet, if God did not create "matter [and] the various forms of life," then there was no 'Adam and Eve'; and there was no temptation; and

⁶ Amos 3:3

⁷ Hebrews 7:25

⁸ 2 Timothy 3:15

⁹ Catholic Answers To Fundamentalists' Questions, Philip St. Romain; p.6

¹⁰ Genesis 3:1

there was no fall; and consequently, no need for a Savior. Rome's response is not only an exhibition of the cowardice of unbelief, but not defensible for the very reason they attempt to insinuate creation into evolution.

We do not know how God arranged for the world he created to come to perfection. He could have used the evolution of species by natural selection ("the survival of the fittest") to produce the human body. Scripture says he "formed" it out of "dust from the ground" (Gen. 2:7). Souls cannot evolve from matter but must be directly created by God. However, the breath of life (the soul) was then "breathed" into man by God (Gen. 2:7).¹¹

So the scenario Rome prefers over faith in the scriptural account is that after God turned on the machinery of evolution, He sat back and watched the convulsions on this globe that He had pronounced "good," while fang and claw vied for ascendancy. Then as the blob evolved into a baboon, His interest was piqued. Somewhere in evolution's imagined primate ancestry of man, God spotted "Nebraska Man," or perhaps "Piltdown Man," and breathed a soul into it. He then plucked out a rib and cast it upon the ground, and over the brief span of a millennium or ten, the rib evolved into "Piltdown Woman." Rome is willing to exercise her self-proclaimed "infallible" teaching authority, but only to a point:

The Church **has infallibly** determined that the universe is of finite age—that it has not existed from all eternity—but it **has not infallibly** defined whether the world was created only a few thousand years ago or whether it was created several billion years ago.¹²

Talk about faith (or should I say, "infallibility") going way out on a limb! The truth is that Rome feels fairly confident that no one can prove them wrong concerning the universe, not to mention a present lack of any secular "scientific" voices to the contrary, but as for the age of the world? Obviously the Galileo incident has made Rome "twice shy." Peter, who Rome erroneously claims as her first pope, wrote, "*For this **they are willing ignorant** of, that by the word of God the heaven were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.*"¹³ From Old Testament prophets to New Testament apostles, the Bible is unanimous – God created all things.

*"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."*¹⁴

*"All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."*¹⁵

¹¹ Catholic Christianity, Peter Kreeft; p. 48-49

¹² CatholicAnswers.com; Adam, Eve, and Evolution (Emphasis mine – ed.)

¹³ 2 Peter 3:5

¹⁴ Hebrews 11:3

¹⁵ John 1:3

Consequently, “Bible Christians” believe that by tracing man’s existence back through the generations to Adam, we come to the seven days of creation exactly as the Bible records. Not billions, but thousands of years ago. God said, “*But to this man will I look; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*”¹⁶ But apologists like Romain would sooner take Jehudi’s penknife¹⁷ to Scripture than question the magisterium or “sacred Tradition” of Rome, or the theories of *science falsely so called*.¹⁸

IF THEY WILL NOT HEAR MOSES AND THE PROPHETS

It is not unusual to go to a Catholic site on the Internet and find a criticism of those of us who embrace the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. This is fair enough, because anybody who cleaves to a particular position should be able to face criticism and defend that position; but how? “My priest said so... my pastor said so... the church said so... this experience proves it”? Even Rome agrees, at least in theory, that there is a source of authority that overshadows any teaching, any doctrine, and any revelation:

It is not a matter of *projecting novel opinions or ideologies* upon biblical writings but of sincerely seeking to discover what the text has to say at the present time. The text of the Bible has authority over the Christian church at all times, and, although centuries have passed since the time of its composition, the text retains its role of privileged guide not open to manipulation. ...[T]he magisterium of the church is not above the word of God.¹⁹

Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant.²⁰

If *sola scriptura* is rejected by Catholic apologists, certainly *superus scriptura* is recognized. It is to the bar of this “more sure word of prophecy” that every claim of any “Christian” group must be brought: Baptist, Presbyterian, Nazarene, Lutheran, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, et al....yes, and even Catholic; all must meet there and present their credentials. The veracity of their teaching must be determined by the touchstone of Scripture, and it must be done without “manipulation” of the text of Scripture. It is not the privilege of the Church to usurp authority over what the Bible says, but it is the Bible that assumes authority over what the Church is to teach. The Church, if it is to be the true Church of Christ, must... in fact, it will submit to the authority of the written Word of God. And by declaring that the Magisterium is a “servant” of the Word of God, the inferiority of the Magisterium is admitted; however, the presumption of its

¹⁶ Isaiah 66:2

¹⁷ Jeremiah 36:23&24

¹⁸ 1 Timothy 6:20

¹⁹ The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church by The Pontifical Commission; IV, A., 1; (author’s italics)

²⁰ (SecondExodus.com)

loyalty as a “servant” is merely biased conjecture. It has yet to be proved. Jesus said, “*Where I am, there also shall my servant be.*”²¹ As it pursues strange and often pagan doctrine, this self-proclaim “servant” (the Magisterium) is rarely found anywhere near the Word of God. Rome further states:

While every reading of the Bible is necessarily selective, care should be taken to avoid tendentious interpretations, that is, readings which, instead of being docile to the text make use of it only for their own narrow purposes.²²

And yet “tendentious interpretations” is unquestionably Rome’s great guilt. To be tendentious, the bias of an interpretation has to come from a source outside of the Bible, such as a sect and its peculiar doctrines. This source is used to force the desired readings into a selected text. Without that imposition, the text would not say what the interpreter wished it to say. A good example is Rome’s own confession of its tendentious spirit when attempting to wrest scriptural support for its exclusive beliefs about Mary:

As in the arguments for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the scriptural texts alone, **without their interpretation by tradition**, would not furnish the complete meaning of the dogma with all required certitude, so likewise for the dogma of the Assumption. **Once** the distinct and certain knowledge of the fact by **tradition is conceded**, it can be demonstrated that this truth is **implicitly** contained in Scripture (cfr. L. Lercher, S.J., “*Institutiones Dogmaticae*,” Innsbruck, 1925, Vol. III, p. 338).²³

If, for example, a Catholic apologist seeks to find a particular “Marian” text from Scripture to support the Catholic doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception” he immediately confronts an enormous problem: “**No direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma can be brought forward from Scripture.**”²⁴ In other words, there is no text to be found in Scripture that even hints at this Catholic doctrine, let alone expresses it. However, if that same apologist is cunning, he can by employing tendentious “**interpretation by [sacred] tradition**” “make use” of the text for Rome’s “own narrow purposes.” When a sectarian doctrine makes an outlandish claim that finds no hint of support in Scripture, that doctrine should be discarded. The only other option is to claim that somehow the body of these strange teachings compliment or expand our understanding of the gospel. This act, however, is one of “*deceiving and being deceived.*”²⁵ Catholic convert, Mark Shea, says of his book entitled “By What Authority” that:

²¹ John 12:26

²² The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church by the Pontifical Biblical Commission

²³ The Vatican Council on the Assumption of Our Lady; www.catholicculture.org (Emphasis mine – ed.)

²⁴ The Catholic Encyclopedia, Classic 1914 Edition. (Emphasis mine – ed.)

²⁵ 2 Timothy 3:13

...it is written for the Evangelical who wishes to confront that Faith (Catholic) and, in particular, **its claim that the gospel is not fully expressed apart from Sacred Tradition.**²⁶

What part of the gospel is not fully expressed? That Christ died to save sinners? That He who knew no sin became sin for us? That whoever believes on Him has eternal life? The real reason for this claim of “full expression” is that there is no “Roman Catholicism” to be found in the gospel. No co-Redemptrix; no efficacy of dead “saints”; no indulgences; no bloodless sacrifice of the Mass; no purgatory, etc. The Gospel has no more need of Rome’s “Sacred Tradition” than the sun has need of a candle.

Mark Shea erroneously attempts to find at least a scriptural analogy for his own faith in Rome’s Traditions:

Thus, just as the New Testament praises the Old, just as St. Paul praises his native Judaism (Rom 3:1-2), just as Christ fulfills rather than annihilates his Jewish roots (Mt. 5:17), so I believe Catholic Tradition builds on all I received from Evangelicalism.²⁷

“St. Paul praises his native Judaism.” He does? Is he not rather praising God’s gracious bounty? “*Because unto them were committed the oracles of God.*”²⁸ Is he not rather praising God’s faithfulness? “*Let God be true and every man a liar.*”²⁹ It is man that departs from truth, and God who remains faithful. Catholic Tradition is a departure from truth. It does not tread in the same footsteps as Scripture, nor even venture near the same path. It takes a journey that leads a different way. Scripture tells us that “*He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*”³⁰ Paul looked back upon his “Jewishness” and wrote: “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung.*”³¹ There may be a privilege in where a person is born, but the praise must be for God’s mercy and grace. Matthew 5:17 is speaking of Scripture being fulfilled, not someone’s genealogical roots. Jesus’ roots as the Son of Man may have led back to Abraham, but it was the promises made by God that are being referenced. And in none of these examples did the people try to inflate their understanding of Scripture by deferring to tradition. For when Judaism’s *sacred* Tradition departed from God, both Christ and Paul condemned it.

²⁶ By What Authority, Mark Shea; p.15 (Emphasis mine – ed.)

²⁷ By What Authority, Mark Shea; p. 17

²⁸ Romans 3:2

²⁹ Romans 3:4

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:31

³¹ Philippians 3:7&8

MOST MEN WILL PROCLAIM, EVERY ONE HIS OWN GOODNESS

Applying the appellation “sacred” is a ruse, an attempt to distinguish Rome’s tradition from other, common, or secular tradition. It is similar to the employment of the word “servant” as compliment for tradition; it is an assumption that is unproved. What makes Rome’s tradition any better than the traditions of another “Christian” sect? What makes it of different kind than the sacred traditions of the Jews that Jesus condemned? No doubt, most Catholics would confidently utilize a maxim of Karl Keating:

For the Catholic the answer can be almost deceptively simple: We know because the church tells us so.³²

Centuries before the inauguration of the Catholic Church, and even through the halcyon days of what was to her, “Pax Romana,” when the world lay prostrate at her feet and the dictates of Rome spelled life or death to whomsoever she chose, there existed numerous bodies of believers who did not hold tradition in camaraderie or solidarity with the Bible. To them, as to us, God’s Word required no broken reed of human tradition to lean upon. Rome of necessity disagreed:

A book although Divine and inspired **is not intended to support itself**. If it is obscure (and what unprejudiced person will deny that there are obscurities in the Bible?) it must be interpreted. And even if it is clear it does not carry with it the guarantee of its Divinity, its authenticity, or its value. *Someone must bring it within reach and no matter what be done the believer cannot believe in the Bible nor find in it the object of his faith until he has previously made an act of faith in the intermediary authorities between the word of God and his reading.* Now, authority for authority, is it not better to have recourse to that of the Church than to that of the first comer? (They sit in Moses seat) Liberal Protestants, such as M. Auguste Sabatier, have been the first to recognize that, if there must be a religion of authority, the Catholic system with the splendid organization of its living magisterium is far superior to the Protestant system, **which rests everything on the authority of a book.**³³

The opening statement echoes the claim of cults and one cannot help but sense that the last nine words of the quote above were spewed out with disdain. Considering other things that are said in this portion quoted, the reader has to understand that the testimony of a “Liberal Protestant,” who by virtue of his “liberal” position rejects the Word of God, provides no compelling evidence in support of Rome’s contentions. Also, the Bible is not “a book.” It is the inspired Word of God. And since inspiration without preservation is meaningless, it is the inspired and preserved Word of God. Because this inspired, preserved, (and as a consequence of God’s nature) infallible

³² Catholicism and Fundamentalism, Karl Keating, p. 262

³³ The Catholic Encyclopedia, Classic 1914 Edition; Tradition and Living Magisterium (Emphasis mine – ed.)

Word of God is unlike any book or any document of man ever written, the believer “rests everything on the authority of” **the Word** of God... because it is the Word of “**God**”:

*“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, **but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.**”³⁴*

Rome in truth “rests everything on the authority of a book,” even to her convoluted doctrine and perversion of Christianity; if that “book” is not the Word of God, all her claims are worse than lies. When she seeks to establish her false Petrine dogma, and subsequent teaching authority, it is to that “book” she turns, and upon that “book” she rests. When she makes this indefensible boast:

At the head of this episcopal body is the supreme authority of the Roman pontiff, *the successor of St. Peter* in his primacy as he is his successor in his see. As supreme authority in the teaching body, which is infallible, he himself is infallible. The episcopal body is infallible also, but only in union with its head, from whom moreover it may not separate, since to do so would be to separate from the foundation on which the Church is built. The authority of the pope may be exercised without the co-operation of the bishops, and this even in infallible decisions which both bishops and faithful are bound to receive with the same submission.³⁵

She has first accepted the gospel narrative as factual, preserved, and inspired.

NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES, NOR THE POWER OF GOD

The Bible says, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*”³⁶ Nowhere is “tradition” proposed as necessary to make the “*man of God ...perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works!*”³⁷ Rome states that, “no matter what be done the believer cannot believe in the Bible nor find in it the object of his faith until he has previously made **an act of faith in the intermediary authorities between the word of God and his reading** (emphasis mine – ed.)” Christians contend that rather it is an unseen act of the Holy Spirit (*the wind bloweth where it listeth*³⁸) that convicts the sinner of his sins, and consequently imparts belief in and submission to God’s Word. God uses no human

³⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (Emphasis mine – ed.)

³⁵ The Catholic Encyclopedia, Classic 1914 Edition; Tradition and Living Magisterium

³⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16

³⁷ 2 Timothy 3:17

³⁸ John 3:8

intermediaries to establish the germ of faith that rests in His Word. His Word is the Authority and Power. “*So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*”³⁹ Faith itself is the gift of God.⁴⁰ God needed no intermediaries between His Word and natural creation,⁴¹ nor does He need any intermediaries between His Word and a new creation.⁴² “*The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and the joint and marrow.*”⁴³ When God calls out to a sinner, without any preceding faith in the authority of an intermediary, “*Lazarus, come forth!*”⁴⁴ then that man instantly arises from his deadness in trespasses and sin to newness of life in Christ Jesus. Paul bears witness to this fact: “*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*”;⁴⁵ it is the inward working of the Spirit that converts the soul and not the outward recognition of human authority that first convicts the mind. Jesus testified, “*My sheep hear my voice,*”⁴⁶ and this without the “authority” of any man testifying that it *is* His voice. “*Jesus...needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.*”⁴⁷ It is the Word of God that pricks the heart. There is also this illogic in the Catholic position; we are to believe that an omnipotent God cannot, or will not, impart faith in His Word apart from the assurances of the intermediary, but a finite, impotent intermediary can establish faith in his own authority apart from God. And once that confidence is placed in man, then and only then, can it be also directed to the Word of God. Since God is able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham,⁴⁸ and cause that if man should cease to praise His glory, these same mineral fragments should lift up their chorus of adulation;⁴⁹ He certainly does not require man to establish a chain of command which precedes His almighty Word, in order that faith in His Word might be conferred.

It is all smoke and mirrors. It is all “*lies in hypocrisy.*”⁵⁰ Rome’s Tradition requires the support; it can find none in Scripture, so it turns the problem on its head and claims that it is the Bible that cannot stand – that the Bible is weak without Rome’s incongruent “Sacred Tradition” and the dictatorial hand of her magisterium. Rome holds these two aloft like outstretched arms, beckoning all to her bosom. Then like a “*Vierge de Fer*” from her bloodstained history, she entombs her devotees in the darkness of an inevitable death.

³⁹ Isaiah 55:11

⁴⁰ Acts 18:27

⁴¹ Hebrew 11:3 – “the worlds were framed by the word of God”

⁴² 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “if any man be in Christ he is a new creation”

⁴³ Hebrews 4:12 – “quick” – living, alive.

⁴⁴ John 11:43

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:4

⁴⁶ John 10:27

⁴⁷ John 2:25

⁴⁸ Matthew 3:9

⁴⁹ Luke 19:40

⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 4:2

CALL NO MAN MASTER

The teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church resides in the bishops and is called the *Magisterium*, from the Latin word for *master*. *Only the bishops of the Church have the right to judge the true meaning of revelation and to teach it with authority.*⁵¹

Mark Shea was frustrated by what he considered to be “circular [reliance] – belief in the self-attesting Bible.”

I began with the question of how tradition, according to Catholic teaching, came down to us, “Is it,” I asked, “just as circular for the Church to say “Our inspired tradition is from the apostles as for a modern Evangelical to say ‘Scripture is self-attesting’?” “No,” said the Church, “it is not circular at all. For the authority of the Church’s bishops to say this comes not from themselves nor from their own claims, but from the apostles who appointed them and ordered them to appoint others in their name.” As the Second Vatican Council put it:

In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the Apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them “their own position of teaching authority.”

According to Catholic teaching, the Church’s authority was a line, not a circle. That line, said the Church, led straight back via the bishops to the apostles, and through them, to Jesus Christ. Furthermore the Church said that the evidence for the beginning of this line is in the New Testament itself, *while the evidence for the Bible-only revelation is (as I had discovered) simply nowhere in Scripture.*⁵²

Via the circular path of Rome’s claim of authority, Shea is assured he has found a line that “led straight back via the *bishops* to the apostles, and through them, to Jesus Christ.” That the Bible claims to being the Word of God strained credulity for Shea, but let Rome attest to herself, and all is at peace once more. Let us change one word and declare that Christians always have had a line that “led straight back via the *epistles* to the apostles, and through them, to Jesus Christ.” Our authority then is not self-aggrandizing Rome, but a line directly to Christ: the Written Word of God. The Bible is our straight line to the authority of God. What does Shea have? The word of men, and their circular claim of authority:

⁵¹ ReachingCatholics.org (Italics mine – ed.)

⁵² By What Authority? Mark Shea, p.132 (Italics mine – ed.)

For the Catholic the answer can be almost deceptively simple: We know because the church tells us so.⁵³

Follow this “line” of authority. “Sacred” Tradition, not the Bible, says that Peter was the first pope of Rome. “Sacred” Tradition further claims that the “authority” to teach (the magisterium) was bestowed upon the bishops of the Church of Rome by Peter and the other apostles.

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.⁵⁴

Therefore, exercising this magisterium, the pope and bishops command Catholics that they are to believe what the “Sacred” Tradition says about the magisterium. No, not much circular reliance here. If it could be proved from Scripture that Rome’s Petrine Dogma was true, and it cannot, but if it could, you would still be faced with Shea’s “circular [reliance] – belief in a self-attesting Bible.” For the papacy would rest its whole case on Scripture attesting to the fact that it is “Scripture,” and that Matthew from Scripture supports their false claim. You would not have a straight line, but a crooked one at best; one that leads back (according to Catholic Tradition) to “circular reliance.” Rome has been hoist on her own petard. And you would still have to prove that Peter had been in Rome as the bishop, and also establish the validity of Papal claim to that throne. For Shea, the whole concept of Scripture witnessing its own authenticity and authority staggers belief; but a group of men arrayed in satin and silk, purple and scarlet, wins his heart. In other words, you cannot believe the Bible because it says it is the Bible, but you can believe men who say they are “the” men. In a previous article, I included an observation concerning the day that Rome declared the infallibility of her popes: **a fallible council of men made a fallible decision**⁵⁵ **that the pope was infallible.** Peter De Rosa wrote of the papal claims based on Matthew 16:18:

There is, however, another interpretation of this text with a better pedigree than most Catholics realize. It may jolt them to hear that the great Fathers of the church saw no connection between it and the pope. Not one of them applies ‘Thou art Peter’ to anyone but Peter. One after another they analyse it: Cyprian, Origen, Cyril, Hilary, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine. They are not exactly Protestants. Not one of them calls the Bishop of Rome a Rock or applies to him *specifically* the promise of the Keys. This is as staggering to Catholics as if they were to find no mention in the Fathers of the Holy Spirit

⁵³ Catholicism and Fundamentalism, Karl Keating, p. 262

⁵⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church; part 1, sec.1 article 2/ 85

⁵⁵ Since there were those on the council who opposed the decision, this alone makes the vote fallible.

or the resurrection of the dead. The great pun, the play on words, was applied exclusively to Peter.

The surprises do not stop there. For the Fathers, it is Peter's faith – or the Lord in whom Peter has faith – which is called the Rock, not Peter. All the Councils of the church from Nicaea in the fourth century to Constance in the fifteenth agree that Christ himself is the only foundation of the church, that is, the Rock on which the church rests. Perhaps this why not one of the Fathers speaks of a transference of power from Peter to those who succeed him; not one speaks, as church documents do today, of an 'inheritance'.⁵⁶

“Sacred” Tradition and the magisterium are flexible and discretionary, if nothing else. If “*the evidence for the Bible-only revelation is (as I had discovered) simply nowhere in Scripture,*” where is Rome's claim to be found?

For the Catholic the answer can be almost deceptively simple: We know because the church tells us so.⁵⁷

It is in the circular reasoning and self-attesting of the Catholic Church. The whole argument for Rome's position rests upon circular reliance. The bishops of Rome confirm the authority of Tradition and Tradition confirms the authority of the bishops of Rome. In short, Rome confirms the authority of Rome:

It is clear that Christ intended that the Bishops (the Apostles and their successors) had the authority and duty to teach the faithful. **This teaching authority is called the *Magisterium*.**⁵⁸

Rome has confidently boasted (although they believe otherwise) that “this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant” – so it is the self-proclaimed servant of “the self-attesting Bible.” “Ah,” replies a Catholic, “for us the Bible is not self-attesting, its validity is confirmed by our Church.” But there can be no Christian Church aside from the testimony of Scripture, “*I will build my church*”;⁵⁹ and so the Bible must attest to itself before any church can submit its claim for review. Just as we are to accept Scripture's testimony concerning the “Church”, so must we believe its witness concerning itself: “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*”⁶⁰ Shea and Rome reject “Bible-only revelation,” preferring this confusing, contradictory, and convoluted pile of sand they have built their house upon.

⁵⁶ Vicars of Christ; Peter De Rosa, p. 24

⁵⁷ Catholicism and Fundamentalism, Karl Keating, p. 262

⁵⁸ Catholic-pages.com (Emphasis mine – ed.)

⁵⁹ Matthew 16:18

⁶⁰ Matthew 24:35

SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH: THY WORD IS TRUTH

The apostles relied upon written scripture, not oral tradition, when convincing listeners of the truth of Jesus Christ.⁶¹ For Rome, her sophistry notwithstanding, the magisterium is the Master of the Scriptures and “Sacred” Tradition is superincumbent. She cannot afford to have her people see the truth for that would take them far from her residence. Rome has assumed the role of a hoary decrepit sexton and the glorious gift of God’s gospel is lost from sight, buried beneath layers of “Sacred” Tradition; the magisterium having pronounced anathema⁶² upon her enemy. The Bible has always been the enemy of Rome:

Since it is manifest by experience that if the Holy Bible in the vulgar tongue be suffered to be read everywhere without distinction, more evil than good arises, let the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor be abided by in this respect, so that, after consulting with the parish priest or the confessor, they may grant permission to read translations of the Scriptures, made by Catholic writers, to those whom they understand to be able to receive no harm, but an increase of faith and piety from such reading (which faculty let them have in writing). But whosoever shall presume to read these Bibles, or have them in possession without such faculty, shall not be capable of receiving absolution of their sins, unless they have first given up their Bibles to the ordinary.⁶³

The choice for a Catholic is simple; throw yourself upon the mercy of the merciful God, and believe His Word, and trust in Christ alone to save your soul, or continue in the labyrinth of deceit that is Catholicism. *“Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.”*⁶⁴

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⁶¹ John 5:39, Acts 8:35; 17:11; 18:28, Romans 4:3; 11:2

⁶² **A pope’s curse pronounced on infidels:** By the authority of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and the undefiled Virgin Mary, Mother of God and the Celestial Virtues, angels, archangels. Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Cherubims and Seraphims, and of all the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and of all the Apostles, Evangelists, of the Holy Innocents who in the sight of the Holy Lamb are found worthy to sing, of the holy martyrs, and holy Confessors, and of the holy Virgins, and of all the Saints together, and of the Holy Elect of God, may he be damned.

We excommunicate and anathematize him, and from the threshold of the holy church of God we sequester him that he may be tormented and despised, and be delivered over to Dothan and Aberam, and those who say unto the Lord, Depart from us, for we desire none of thy ways;’ as a fire is quenched with water, so let the light of him be put out forevermore, unless he shall repent and make satisfaction. Amen.

May the Father who created him curse him; may the Son who suffered for us curse him; may the Holy Ghost who suffered for us in Baptism curse him. May the Holy Cross which Christ for our salvation, triumphing over his enemies, ascended, curse him. May the Holy and Eternal Virgin Mary, Mother of God, curse him...

⁶³ From the Congregation of the "Index Of Prohibited Books"; Pope Pius IV

⁶⁴ Jeremiah 9:6