

Are The Traditions of Roman Catholicism of Equal Value With The Bible?

Bible Answers About Denominations

The most controversial issue between the Lord's church, the church of the New Testament, and Roman Catholicism is the question of authority—"What is the final seat of authority in religion?"

The New Testament church believed and taught that the Bible alone is the final rule of faith and practice, while Roman Catholics hold that it is the Bible and tradition as interpreted by the church. In actual practice the Roman Catholic Church, since the infallibility decree of 1870, holds that the final seat of authority is the pope speaking for the church. In 1546, the Council of Trent declared the word of God is contained in both the Bible and in tradition with both being of equal authority, and that it is the duty of every Christian to accord them equal veneration and respect. The New Parish Catechism, p. 11 says, "We find God's revelation in Sacred Scripture and in Tradition." Also from the book, Catholic Belief, p. 33 we have the following: "Like two sacred rivers flowing from Paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God.... of the two, Tradition is to us more clear and safe." Again as we turn to the Catholic book, Christ Among Us, p. 167, we read, "Tradition is the way Christ's Church understands and lives his teachings."

As Loraine Boettner points out, "We need only read church history to discover that when another source of authority is placed alongside Scripture as of equal importance, Scripture eventually becomes relegated to the the background. Whether that other source is reason, emotion, or tradition, the inevitable result is that it supplants Scripture and causes it gradually to fade away. If that other source be reason, we get rationalism. If it is emotion, we get mysticism. And if it is tradition, we get ecclesiastical dictation or clericalism. In each case the Bible, while still given lip service, is effectually superseded."

If you are wondering how the Roman Catholic Church has become honeycombed with paganism, how she has managed to build up a semi-pagan organization, and how she practices so many things that are not found in Scripture, the answer is that the illegitimate authority that Rome has given to uninspired tradition has produced the effect. A study of all religious errors will show that they have one thing in common: They consist either of additions to Scripture, or of subtraction from Scripture, or perhaps a combination of the two.

It is the teaching of Scripture that the Bible contains all that is essential to salvation, and that no other writings or church pronouncements are to be regarded as having divine authority. Numerous references set forth the sufficiency of Scripture and nowhere do we find even a hint that Scripture needs to be supplemented by church councils, papal decrees of any kind, human traditions, or decisions reached by some other individual or body of people.

Even in the Old Testament Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20). It was required of the Israelites that they speak according the word of God and Moses was emphatic about adding or taking away from the word of the Lord. "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deut 4:2).

Moses also wrote, that God would send a prophet the people were to listen to. "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require {it} of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die" (Deut 18:18-20). This prophecy was to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and Luke and the writer of Hebrews inform us that it was (Acts 3:22, 23; Heb. 1:1-2). This means that everything we need was to be given to us through Jesus Christ. Before ascending back to His Father in heaven, Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt 28:18). Because He had all authority He said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me" (John 12:48-50). We are not going to be judged by the words of church councils, papal decrees of any kind, human traditions, or decisions reached by some other individual or body of people.

The reason we are going to be judged by the sayings of Jesus Christ, expressed in the written word, is clearly expressed by Paul when he wrote, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). The authority of Scripture is sufficient. It is understandable (Eph. 3:3-4), and sufficient in power (Rom. 1:16-17), for the purpose given (James 1:21-23; Acts 20:32). All of our spiritual needs are supplied in Christ by the sacred writings. All that we know, can know, or need to know, of God's will concerning Christ, salvation and eternity is learned by reading and studying His written word.

This divine authority is needed because respect for Scriptural authority is the only bulwark against a flood of human additions or innovations as we see today in both Catholicism and Protestantism. It is only within the Scriptures that the pattern of the church founded by Christ is found. This pattern is fully described in the New Testament so that men will always have a safe and perfect guide to follow. It will always be successful when used by faithful men who are satisfied with God's authority. The authority of Jesus Christ is infallible and the New Testament is God's final covenant with mankind and the supreme court of appeal on earth in all religious questions in the Christian age (Matt. 28:18-20; Jude 3; 2 Jno. 911).

We plead with everyone to reject the words of church councils, papal decrees of any kind, human traditions, or decisions reached by some other individual or body of people. The Monte Vista church of Christ has done this and we follow only the divine authority found in Scripture.

Visit us online at: montevista.church
or
Stop by and worship with us!

Monte Vista
church of Christ