

Why must we use the Bible only?

By David Lasseter

I have been privileged to receive several responses to the material I've presented within my web site. Each question submitted has caused me to search more deeply into the Word of God and discover the truths only it contains. Recently I received a response to my study regarding infant baptism, written by Mr. Mario Derksen, the web author of Catholic Insight (<http://www.cathinsight.com/apologetics/infant.htm>). In his response he makes several claims which I will address over the next few lessons. However, as I was considering the points he was including in his essay it became clear to me where I needed to start as I developed my response: Is the Bible authoritative or is it not? If the Bible is authoritative, is it the sole authority in religious matters or are other utterances and writings of man equally authoritative? Before this issue is clearly addressed and the answer plainly revealed, religious division is destined to flourish.

If you haven't already, please take a few moments and read my study on infant baptism and Mr. Derksen's response. I believe it is important for you to fully understand the position each of us takes on the issue as we present our differing views. In the end, what any man says is irrelevant, in that we will be judged solely by the word spoken by Jesus (John 12:48). Each of us will stand before God as individuals and answer for our lives on earth. For these reasons I urge you not to consider the words of any man, but determine for yourselves what authority is valid. But keep in mind that a clear conscience is not sufficient for one to enter into heaven for eternity. Paul states in his defense before the chief priests and their council that "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1) Paul's (Saul's) conscience was clean as he consented to the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58-8:1). But what did the Lord think of his actions? Jesus

asked Saul for the reason he was persecuting His church (Acts 9:4). So despite Saul's clear conscience, he was fighting against the Lord as he persecuted the church. So please do not allow a warm inner glow as you consider your beliefs regarding the issues we'll study to be your sole indication of a right relationship between you and God. You **MUST** allow your mind to prevail over your emotions. If a religious position is clearly based on invalid authority, no matter how strong are the emotional ties to that position it must be discarded. Consequently, much of my response to Mr. Derksen's essay will focus on authority. I want you to form a mental image of the religious world as it stands today--some 28,000 "Christian" religious organizations, each preaching something different but claiming the same God. Ask yourselves "Why is this so?" As you consider each possibility leading to such religious division I believe you'll eventually find the ultimate reason to be adherence to invalid authority. As you consider my study on baptism and Mr. Derksen's response, ask yourselves this question, "Is his teaching based on valid authority?"

DEFINITIONS

As we begin this study I want to make clear the point we'll be proving: The Bible is the inspired Word of God. As is always my practice, I will start with a review of the meaning of the words we are studying. What does the statement "The Bible is the inspired Word of God" declare? Please bear with me as I break this sentence down into its component parts. The Bible is (present tense) the (definite article) inspired (see below) Word (singular) of God (author). Does it seem crazy to divide a sentence in such a fashion? Maybe it does, but unfortunately it is necessary since men have failed to grasp the importance of

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this simple 8-word sentence.

1. Is. A simple word we use everyday. Merriam-Webster tells us the word is the third singular form of "be". The first definition given by Merriam-Webster tells us that it means "to equal in meaning; have the same connotation as". I don't want anyone to leave our study because of an unnecessary emphasis on grammar, but it is essential we have a basic understanding of the words we use to express our ideas. So when we say the Bible is the inspired Word of God we are saying that the Bible is equal in meaning to the inspired Word of God. Another way to say the same thing is to use "the Bible" and "the Word of God" interchangeably. This is something we do on a regular basis. Since "is" represents a present tense form of the word "be" (compared with "was", which is the past tense form of "be"), to say "The Bible is the inspired Word of God" is to emphasize the current nature of the Bible. Let's look at some scriptures which support the statement regarding the current state of the Bible as the inspired Word of God.
 - ◆ Mark 13:31: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." Jesus affirms the eternal nature of the words he spoke. From the day they were uttered they were destined to last for eternity.
 - ◆ John 12:49: The Father told Jesus what He was to say and what He was to speak. Since Jesus spoke the words of the Father, and the words spoken by Jesus are eternal, then the words spoken by the Father are eternal. Since they are eternal, they will never cease being valid. Therefore, they will always be in the present tense.
2. The. Another word spoken hundreds of times by every English speaking person, if not daily then over the span of a few days. It functions as a definite article. Let's return to the dictionary and review the definition. We read that the word "the" is "used as a function word to indicate that a following noun or noun equivalent is a unique or a particular member of its

class." Hmm. A unique or particular member of its class. For example, "The President" is a person who is unique and is a particular member of his class. How many of us would honestly state that the President of the United States is more than one person? We all understand that "the" used in this manner points to one definite individual (the "definite article" function of "the"). So when we say "The Bible is the inspired Word of God", we are saying "The Bible is a unique member of its class in that it is the only inspired Word of God." Just as we have only one active President of the United States, there is only one inspired Word of God. Because of the singular tense of "the" and "word", I'll include scriptures validating the use of the definite article in our sentence above after we examine "word."

3. Word. In the initial statement above I used the singular "word" rather than the plural "words." Notice in our study of "is" we determined that "the Bible" and "the word of God" are interchangeable. But we all know the Bible is not comprised of a single word, but of thousands of words. What I hope to illustrate by this study is how the words contained within the pages of the Bible are woven together into a single "word" of God. Let's look at a couple of scriptures to illustrate this point:
 - ◆ John 5:24: Jesus states that "he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life". Here we see Jesus referring to the words he spoke as a body of knowledge by referring to a singular "word" which one must hear in order to receive the promises made by Jesus.
 - ◆ John 8:47: Jesus tells us that "He who is of God hears God's words." Jesus now refers to the individual words which make up the body of knowledge known as the "word of God." We see this again in Matthew 4:4 when Jesus tells Satan that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Each and every word making up the complete word of God is important and not to be ignored.

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AUTHORITY

In Matthew 28:18 Jesus states, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The American Standard Version of the Bible translates this verse as follows: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." The Greek word *exousia* is translated "power" (KJV) and "authority" (ASV) in this verse. Vine's Expository Dictionary tells us that *exousia* refers to the "power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others." In Matthew 28:18, Jesus indicates that He has all authority in both heaven and in earth. The word "all" leaves nothing out. But in my introduction I stated that we must determine whether the Bible is authoritative. What does the adjective authoritative mean? Merriam-Webster tells us that authoritative means, "having or proceeding from authority, or showing evident authority." Now please carefully consider these words. Jesus tells us that He has all authority, both in heaven and in earth. So, if an utterance or writing is authoritative in religious matters, it came from Jesus. Remember the definition of authoritative: "Having or proceeding from authority." Since Jesus has all authority, what have we already learned about religious leaders today? If they truly have religious authority, Jesus must have delegated it to them. Since no authority is excluded by Jesus' statement in Matthew 28:18, any authority present today must be authorized by Him. We must apply the same logic to religious writings and utterances. In order for any religious writing or utterance to truly be authoritative, it must come from Jesus.

With the background definitions completed, let's determine whether the Bible did come from Jesus. Remember our goal: To determine the truth behind the statement "The Bible is the inspired Word of God". To make this determination we will look at claims made by the Bible itself, and evidences within the Bible that reveals its origin.

CLAIMS MADE BY THE BIBLE

Lets first consider claims made by the Bible itself. In 2 Timothy 3:16,17 Paul records that, "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, throughly furnished unto all good works." So we see the Bible making the claim that it is, in its entirety, "God-breathed" (inspired). Well, that's fine and good. Prove it! Many people say they are something they aren't. Many writings make grand claims that prove to be false. Just because the Bible says it is inspired, do we have anything other than its own grandiose claim to confirm it? How do we know the writer just didn't lend an unjustified air of authority to his work?

EVIDENCE FOR BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

I'm sure there are some art lovers among my online students. How does an art authority know a Van Gogh is really a Van Gogh, or a Picasso a Picasso, or a Rembrandt a Rembrandt? Each painter leaves his or her own characteristic details in their work that reveals the origin. The art authority can closely inspect each work and confirm its authenticity or reveal the fake. Again, lets apply this logic to the scriptures. If we see unequivocal evidence of the work of God in the scriptures, it must mean that the claim made in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 is true. On the other hand, if we see nothing extraordinary within the pages of the Bible, we have to take those verses penned by Paul on ungrounded "faith" only! (I put the word "faith" in quotations, because I don't want any of my students to misunderstand the type of unsubstantiated trust this requires from the true faith we have in God) Now, let's turn to the scriptures and look for evidence of the mind of God guiding the hands of the ones writing the scriptures.

Please turn to Job 26:7. Job was an Old Testament figure who lived centuries before the birth of Christ. Much of the book records the conversations between Job and a

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few friends, who come to comfort him after his great losses. In chapter 26 we see him answering one of the friends, a man named Bildad. As part of his answer he states, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." Please place yourself in the time of Job as you consider these words. To modern man, these words may seem insignificant. But ask yourself, "How did Job know the earth hangs upon nothing." Remember, this was centuries before the birth of Christ, but Job reveals knowledge about the earth that he COULD NOT have known on his own!! As we observe the earth around us, we see a very limited portion of the space surrounding the globe. Modern man knows the earth is not hanging by a string from some celestial hook, or supported by an immense pedestal. We've been in our spaceships and seen such for ourselves. But Job couldn't have known this. The only possible way for him to be aware of this fact would be for one who knows to have revealed it to him. But who knew other than God? Nobody!

Well, maybe Job "got lucky." Am I to believe the Bible is inspired based on one verse? Let's keep looking. Turn to Isaiah 40:22. Isaiah states, "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:" Again, Isaiah is an Old Testament prophet who lived centuries before the birth of Christ. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, four kings of Judah (chapter 1:1). But what does he say in 40:22? "The circle of the earth"?! What was one great concern in the 1400's (a.d.) as men contemplated sailing the seas? Falling over the side of the FLAT earth!! But here, many CENTURIES before Columbus ever sailed across the Atlantic we see Isaiah recording that the earth was ROUND!! Again, ask yourself, "How did Isaiah know the shape of the earth several hundred (even thousand) years before mankind realized it was round?" The only possible way for him to be aware of this fact would be for one who knows to have revealed it to him. But who knew other than

God? Nobody!

2 Timothy 3:16,17 are starting to look a little more promising, aren't they? Let's keep going. Turn back a few chapters in Isaiah, to chapter 7 verse 14. Isaiah records a sign that the Lord Himself would give. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." If we lived during the time of Isaiah and heard him say that, our modern-day response might have been something like, "Isaiah, your elevator doesn't reach the top floor. Come on, a virgin conceiving?" But what happens? Luke records the meeting between Gabriel and Mary in chapter 1, verses 28-38. Mary was troubled by the words spoken by Gabriel (verse 29). He then tells her that she will conceive and bring forth a son (verse 31). This doesn't sound so unusual, except for one thing--Mary was a virgin! (Notice her response to Gabriel in verse 34: "How shalt this be, seeing I know not a man.") In Matthew we read of the fact that this fulfilled the prophecy recorded by Isaiah: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:22,23). How could Isaiah have possibly predicted the occurrence of such a miraculous event except it be revealed to him? He couldn't have! Why would he have predicted such a thing? Certainly not for his own benefit. It wouldn't be fulfilled for hundreds of years. Nobody living at the time of the prophecy would ever see it fulfilled. It was "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

I'm sure someone will say, "Prove to me Mary was a virgin. All we have to go on is her word." So, let's look for a prophecy that wouldn't require trust in Mary's statement. What was going to happen in Bethlehem? Micah 5:2 records, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from

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ascended into heaven in Mark 16) by signs (miracles). The Hebrews writer confirms the same when he writes, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?" (Hebrews 2:3,4) Here the writer states that the ones whose word was confirmed were those who heard Him (Jesus), and who then spoke to the Hebrews writer and others. So we learn two things about one who speaks with authority for Jesus: They heard Him, and they had their word confirmed with signs and wonders. We considered the Greek word *akouo* in our study entitled, "Does God hear a Sinner's prayer?" *Akouo* is translated "hear", and can refer to either the sense of hearing or the understanding of the spoken word. Which use of the word makes most contextual sense in Hebrews 2? The physical sense of hearing. So, those who had the word confirmed were in the presence of Jesus and actually heard the words spoken by Him.

ARE THE WORDS OF MEN AUTHORITATIVE?

Next, let's consider those today who claim to have additional revelations from God. We are warned by Jesus to "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matthew 7:15) But Jesus, how will we know the false prophets when they come our way? They look so innocent on the outside? The words they speak are so uplifting. He tells us, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16 and 20) In the day of the Hebrews writer, what fruit did those who heard Jesus and spoke to others produce? Miracles. Signs and wonders. For us today, what fruit should we demand of those who claim to have additional revelations from God? Miracles. Signs and wonders. What if one claims to have additional revelations from God, but cannot produce the fruit necessary to confirm their claim? We should WHOLLY

REJECT THEM AND WARN ANY WE CAN OF THE WOLF HIDDEN INSIDE THE SHEEP'S CLOTHING!!! What standard should we use for measuring miracles? They must be objective (that is, able to be observed by anyone present) and supernatural. I want to make this point perfectly clear. Many so-called men of God today fool millions by their supposed healings and other "miracles" performed, presumably to lend an air of authority to their words. I was watching Benny Hinn the other day, and was amused by the "miracles" he performed. In one dramatic display of "healing" he suddenly flung his arms in the air and an entire section of people within Chicago's United Center fell to the ground! On a more personal note he laid his hands on a man with pain in his leg, a woman with chest pain, and a third person with deafness (if I recall correctly their ailments). NOT ONE OF THESE INDIVIDUALS HAD AN OBJECTIVE DISORDER WHICH ANYONE PRESENT COULD CLEARLY SEE!! If you observe other "faith healers" you'll see the same thing. Nobody with leprosy appears on the show. No coffins containing a person certified dead by an independent, objective observer appear on stage. Nobody lame from birth that has spent his or her entire life begging for assistance in a public place bothers to show. Is it because these people don't exist? Of course not!! It's because the fraudulent claims of the "faith healers" would be exposed if any did!! But look at the crowds! Are these people applying the standards for fruit inspection demanded by the Bible? Absolutely not! They are being trapped by speech containing enticing words of man's wisdom. Did these people exist in the days of Paul? Most certainly. He tells the Corinthians in his second epistle, chapter 2 verse 4 that, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" So we learn from an authoritative source (the Bible) what we MUST do to confirm the truth of any word not contained within the Bible.

Continuing our consideration of the men to whom the word was revealed, does the Bible give us any more specific information regarding these men? Yes, it does. In Ephe-

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sians 3:5 Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit revealed the word to "holy apostles and prophets." So now we learn the specific groups of people to whom the word was revealed. If we could learn more about these apostles and prophets, we would have additional information to use when evaluating those who claim to have new revelations from God. Who were these apostles and prophets? In Acts 1 we learn who was truly an apostle of Christ. Peter and the other apostles were together and in the process of selecting a replacement for Judas (verses 15-20), who was one of the original 12 apostles (Matthew 10:2-4). In verses 21 and 22 he lists specific criteria which must be met for one to be considered to take Judas' place: he must be a man, and he must have accompanied Jesus and the other apostles from the time of John ("beginning with the baptism of John") to the day Jesus was taken up to heaven. Only then could the man be considered to fill the apostleship vacated by Judas. Well, do any men alive today meet these criteria? Certainly not! Nobody alive today was alive during the baptism of John and witnessed Jesus ascension into heaven. So, what can we say about anyone today who claims to be an apostle? Their statement is not truthful! They are a wolf in sheep's clothing, and must be wholly rejected. In addition, the truth of their hypocrisy must be broadcast to any who will listen! (A hypocrite is someone who appears different on the outside than they are on the inside. The word refers to masks worn by first century actors, which hid their real appearances while appearing in theater performances.) Knowing a few verses of the Bible allows one to make an accurate judgment of who is a false prophet in this situation. Again, we have proven the authoritative status of the Bible. This allows us to use with absolute confidence the standards written within its pages. If someone fails to meet these standards, we KNOW who is truthful and who is not!

What about the prophets to whom the word was revealed? Is there any information we can use to judge a true prophet from a false? Yes, there is. We've already considered one: We'll know them by their fruit. If

one claiming to have a revelation from God cannot produce the right fruit, then we know he/she is a false prophet. But do any true prophets exist today? If we knew the answer to that question, it would make the process of evaluating fruit much easier. If the answer is no, then anyone claiming to have anything in addition to the Bible would be known to be a false prophet and must be wholly rejected, with their hypocrisy broadcast to all who will listen.

Let's answer the question, "Do any true prophets exist today?" First, what was/is a prophet? Prophecy "is that which cannot be known by natural means." (Vine's Expository Dictionary) Therefore, a prophet is one who speaks something that cannot be known by natural means. As we've seen above, a prophet is one who speaks the word of God through revelation from God. How did/does a prophet gain this ability? In 1 Corinthians 12 we see prophecy included as a spiritual gift (verse 10). It is included in the list of other spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, healing, working of miracles, etc. So we learn in these verses that prophecy was a special ability granted to some people, and not to others. But how did they gain this ability? Turn to Acts 8. In verse 14 we see the apostles learning that Philip had preached the word in Samaria. While in Samaria, Philip had been preaching and had the word he preached confirmed by the miracles he performed (verse 6). But what could the apostles do that Philip could not? We see that those at Jerusalem sent two apostles to Samaria (Peter and John) to do something Philip could not: grant unto those at Samaria the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians. We see in verses 15-17 that the apostles laid their hands upon those at Samaria and they received the Holy Ghost. So here we learn how prophets received their ability to prophesy: through the laying on of the hands of an apostle. Without an apostle, there were no prophets. So, do we have true prophets today? No! It is absolutely impossible for anyone who claims to be a prophet to be telling the truth today! When the last apostle died, the last true prophet had already been made. When the last true prophet died, the end of prophecy occurred. What

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does this tell us about the Bible? It is the complete word of God, and anything added to it today is false!

What additional scriptures do we have supporting this claim? We learn of the fate of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 13. This chapter follows the listing of spiritual gifts in chapter 12. Paul begins chapter 13 by listing a few of these gifts (tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith), and showing how they are of no value without love. He spends most of his time in chapter 13 telling us of love and its characteristics. But notice how he ends the chapter: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (verses 8-10) So we see that those things which are in part (the spiritual gifts) will be done away, but not until that which is "perfect" (complete) is come. But what is this "perfect" thing of which Paul speaks? Look in verse 13 of the same chapter. He says, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." So, everything but faith, hope, and love will be done away. Is that which is perfect referring to Jesus, or the second coming? Is that when prophecies will cease? No! It cannot be! Look at verse 13 again. Notice what three things will remain: faith, HOPE, and love. Why did I emphasize hope? Turn to Romans 8:24 and 25. What does Paul tell us about hope? We don't hope for that we already have, we hope for that which is yet to come! Let me repeat that for clarity: We don't hope for that we already have, we hope for that which is yet to come! Were the spiritual gifts going to remain until Jesus comes again? No! They were going to end at some point in time before the second coming of Christ. If the "perfect" refers to Jesus at His second coming there would be no need for hope to remain, since that for which we hope would have already taken place! But when were they going to end? Logic tells us that they will end when their purpose had been fulfilled. What was their purpose? To reveal

the word of God, which would eventually be recorded in written form. Once the complete word of God was recorded in written form, the need for spiritual gifts would have ended. We have already seen that the complete revelation of God MUST have already occurred, since it is impossible for true prophets to be with us today. So again we see that the Bible represents the full and complete revelation of God, and anything anyone claims to have in addition to it is devoid of truth!

TRADITION

As I understand the teachings of the Catholic church, they recognize three sources of religious authority: The Bible, the "Church", and tradition. We've examined the Bible in detail, and have shown it to be a valid source of religious authority. I've published an extensive study on the church elsewhere on this site, so I'll not include another detailed examination as part of this study. I recommend reviewing the section on Matthew 16:13-18 for a scriptural answer to the hierarchy of the Catholic church. As part of our current study I believe it is appropriate to note the fact that Jesus is the head of the church, His body (Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 5:23). Since He is the head and the church is His body, the teachings of the true church will be identical to those of Jesus. Any teachings of any church which contradict those of Jesus identifies that organization as not being the true body of Christ. But what about tradition? Is it also a valid source of religious authority for those who wish to be pleasing to God? The Catholic Encyclopedia addresses the difference in views between "Protestants" and Catholics regarding tradition and states, "Catholics, on the other hand, hold that there may be, that there is in fact, and that there must of necessity be certain revealed truths apart from those contained in the Bible". Let's examine this important question.

The Greek word translated "tradition" is *paradosis*. I'd like to begin by listing each scripture where the NT writer used the word *paradosis* (English translation of *paradosis* is in italics):

- ◆ Matthew 15:2-6: "Why do thy disciples

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transgress the *tradition* of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your *tradition*? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your *tradition*."

- ◆ Mark 7:3-13: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the *tradition* of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the *tradition* of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the *tradition* of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own *tradition*. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your *tradition*, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."

- ◆ 1 Corinthians 11:1-3: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances*, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."
- ◆ Galatians 1:11-14: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the *traditions* of my fathers."
- ◆ Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the *tradition* of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
- ◆ 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the *traditions* which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."
- ◆ 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the *tradition* which he received of us."

We see in these few verses that tradition may be either bad or good. Jesus emphasizes the negative aspect of tradition when he tells the Pharisees that they laid aside the commandment of God when they followed the traditions of men. By doing so their worship to God was vain! Paul also addresses the nega-

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tive aspect of tradition when he tells the Galatians that he was more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers than were others of his nation (the Jewish people). He tells the Colossians that they may be spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men.

Of the 13 times *paradosis* is used in the New Testament, only three have a positive "spin" to them. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to keep the ordinances exactly as he delivered them. He gives the same exhortation to those of Thessalonica when he tells them to stand fast and hold to the traditions they had been taught, whether by his word or his epistle. And finally he tells them how serious a matter it would be for one who walked disorderly and not after the tradition he delivered to them: He was to be disfellowshipped (withdrawn from)!

In these verses we learn that traditions may be either of men, or of God. The consequences of following the traditions of men are extremely serious, but no less so are the consequences of failing to follow the traditions of God. With so much to lose should we fail to be true to the traditions of God, we must ask ourselves, "How do I identify the traditions of men?" To answer this question let's consider again Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 15: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." In these verses Jesus tells us how we identify the traditions of men. In verse 4 He said, "For God commanded...". In verse 5 He said, "But ye say...". So what is a tradition of men? Anything men say that is different than what God said! Did Paul's ordinances differ from God's? Absolutely not! Paul tells us the source of the things he wrote: They were from the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). Being the commandments of the Lord they must be obeyed exactly or grave consequences will result. As we discovered earlier in this study, Paul was in a position that no man today can occupy: He was an apostle (Romans

1:1) Being an apostle He was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:5). As we learned earlier in this study, no man today is qualified to serve as an apostle. Since true prophets were given this ability by the laying on of an apostles' hands, no true prophets exist. Since the two groups of men to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the word no longer exist, inspiration has ceased. Therefore, any commandment given by men that is different than the commandments we have revealed in the Bible is known to be of men and not of God. Adherence to such carries grave consequences and, if taught as religious doctrine, renders worship vain. Any tradition that cannot be supported by scripture is a tradition of men. Therefore, today there is only one valid source of religious authority: The Bible.

SUMMARY

As I summarize this study I would like for each and every one of my students to apply the common sense I know you have. In Mr. Derksen's response to my study on infant baptism he refers to something called the "deposit of faith." He claims that the pope, bishops, priests, etc. are continuing to add to this deposit, and therefore the words they speak are as authoritative as the Bible. We have shown that such a deposit is a falsehood and must be rejected as such! The bank has been closed for nearly 2000 years! Anything any pope, bishop, priest, "prophet", "apostle", "pastor" or any other self-appointed religious "authority" claims to know that cannot be confirmed within the pages of the Bible is untrue! Why would Mr. Derksen, as a Catholic, refute claims of revelation from other religious groups? I'm sure any Catholic who wished to convert to Mormonism would be quickly and completely denounced as a child of God. But why? The Mormons claim to have a revelation from God also. Why isn't their revelation valid? Why would another Catholic who wished to embrace Islam be condemned for this decision? Islam also claims to have a revelation from God. If some revelations are true and some are false, how is anyone to know which is which, and what right does anyone else have to say that another revelation is false? If a Catholic wished to embrace any other "faith" they

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should be encouraged to do so! If this "deposit of faith" were true, then the possibility of determining a false prophet would have ended. Since Jesus tells us to judge which prophets are false based upon the fruit they produce, then He must be a false prophet Himself! If we have no authoritative standard against which to judge fruit, then Jesus has no right to warn us to be on guard for the rotten fruit produced by false prophets. The words of Jesus would be lies, and as such the entire Bible would be invalid. ONE CANNOT BELIEVE IN A "DEPOSIT OF FAITH" AND ALSO BELIEVE THE BIBLE!! The two ARE mutually exclusive!

Whom are you going to believe? Are you going to believe the words of true prophets, whose prophecies were fulfilled again and again and whose words were confirmed with true supernatural signs easily witnessed by anyone present? Or are you going to believe the words of the pope, bishop, priest, "pastor", "reverend", etc. which are not accompanied by supernatural signs that can be easily observed by anyone present and whose words contradict the Bible? Not only do they contradict the Bible, they frequently contradict themselves! I've pointed out some of those contradictions in my study on infant baptism. If the words of such men were truly authoritative, why have the doctrines changed so drastically over time?

We have defined the words "authority" and "authoritative", and demonstrated conclusively with simple logic how the Bible easily meets the definitions of these words. Please carefully consider whom you believe. Your eternal destiny is resting on your decision.

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