IS TRADITION OUR AUTHORITY?
THE PROBLEMS WITH UNWRITTEN TRADITION

“But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”

~ Matthew 15:3

1. What Is Tradition
   a. "We have always done it this way", "the historical faith", “church fathers”
   b. The extra-biblical transmission of beliefs and behaviors down through history
   c. RCC Tradition is not scripture, and is in the Church’s heart - CCC 78, 81, 82, 113
   d. There is biblical tradition and then there is Tradition outside the Bible
   e. Examples: praying before meals, Sundays, tithing, sinlessness of Mary, holidays

2. Tradition as an Authority
   a. Preaching was the method before the Bible was written – 1Cor 1:21, Rom 10:14
   c. Tradition not always bad, not always avoided, not all untrue, should be considered
   d. Tradition has merits, a voice, and historical authority, but is it divinely ordained?
   e. Authority def. Legal power or right to command; have power over; rule; judge.
   f. Authority is derived from the author: the author of truth can only be God
   g. RCC holds that Tradition as equally authoritative as the Bible – CCC 82
   h. If Tradition and the Bible are authorities, then neither one is the final authority
   i. If Tradition is divinely authoritative, the Bible is insufficient, incomplete, and errant

3. Problems with Tradition
   a. An authority is objective, clear, historical, comprehensive, sufficient, unchanging
   b. Identification: A single continuous transmission of unwritten beliefs does not exist
      i. We have few records. Not all the “fathers” agree, not all the popes agree
   c. Source: we can’t be sure of this; adding time does not change where it came from
      i. A true tradition must come from God; man’s tradition is not authoritative
   d. Easily created: Traditions are easy to make, but also “traditions die hard”
   e. Easily changed: like the game ‘telephone’, the message is quickly lost
      i. Depends on memory, fragile oral communication, and undefined language
      ii. The word of God was corrupted in the first generation – 2 Cor 2:17, 4:2
      iii. They turned from the gospel received of Paul orally - Gal 1:6-9
      iv. People will listen to what is pleasurable - Titus 1:9-14, 2 Tim 4:4
   f. Subject to hearsay and rumor: Some started by the church – John 21:22-23
   g. Our understanding is fallible: How can our oral Tradition be infallible?
   h. Makes the Bible insufficient: Which Paul says is sufficient – 2 Tim 3:15-17
   i. Adds to the Bible: There are warnings against this -Deu 4:2, Pro 30:5-6, Rev 22:18
   j. Open Canon: It leaves the Bible open for additions (A Pauline truth - Col 1:25)
   k. Tradition does not rightly divide: It is contrary to sound doctrine – 2 Tim 2:7, 2:15
   l. Creates a conflict with the Bible: Requires a third party to decide... mother Church?

4. Conclusion: All true tradition comes from the Bible, not from unwritten Tradition
   a. The infallible authority of God’s words in the Bible rules over any Tradition
   b. We evaluate all traditions from the single infallible authority, “is it Biblical?”