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Scripture Proves the Church

By Gary Shirley

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Consider the scenario: You are at the park, minding your own business and enjoying a day off from your labors. Suddenly, he appears. The well-meaning Christian who wants to "save" you from damnation. In his zeal to enlighten your wretched soul, he whips out his handy Bible and fires off a few choice New Testament phrases. He is confident you will be dazzled.

He begins by citing St. Paul in the ever-popular 2 Tim 3:16, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction and for training in righteousness..." This is rapidly followed by Christ's admonition to the Sadducees in Mt. 22:29, "...You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God." Finally, he clinches the deal with the story of the learned Jew turned believer named Apollos who, in Acts 18:28, "...vigorously refuted the Jews in public, establishing from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus."

He appears quite pleased with his efforts. Having shown you the preeminence of the scriptures in the selected passages, he hopes you'll conclude, as he has, that the Bible is all you need for salvation. No creed, no church, and no hierarchy are required.

Taking a long pull on your coffee, you look him square in the eye. With devastating kindness, you thank him for honoring the authority of the Catholic Church. He stiffens up immediately. Like a dog looking at a clock, his facial expression belies a complete lack of understanding. He is momentarily silent, for he has no pithy rejoinder to such a bizarre comment.

He finally gathers his thoughts enough to inquire as to what your response could possibly mean. You politely declare that you are a Catholic and, as such, believe that the fullness of Truth resides in the Catholic Church, not simply in the Bible. The Bible, you affirm, is part of a much larger deposit of revelation. In fact, the Catholic Church is the mother of the Bible.

Shocked at your impunity, he immediately fires back that you are calling into question the very Word of God, hoping that will cow you into submission. You smile and offer to share some insights to defend your position. He agrees to listen, half-expecting to be amused as you concoct some wild story.

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You begin by explaining that the New Testament letters and accounts he cited earlier of Paul, Matthew, and Luke (author of Acts) were written during the first century. While Christianity survived underground during the ensuing centuries of persecution, these documents, along with others, were scattered across the Roman Empire. There was no New Testament yet; there was no Bible as we know it today.

You remind him that it wasn't until the Christian faith was legitimized by Emperor Constantine's decree in the fourth century that the Church could publicly begin to compile a canon, or rule, of sacred writings. The task required sorting through hundreds of letters and texts attributed to Apostles, evangelists, bishops and saints. The goal was, in essence, to distill the truly inspired works from those that were merely inspiring.

Pope St. Damasus I in 382 AD first proposed a list of twenty-seven "books" that would comprise the canon. Gatherings, known as synods, of esteemed bishops were then convened in the north African cities of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD). These synods prayerfully attempted to discern the will of the Holy Spirit in deciding what texts belonged in the canon and which did not. The Church well understood the import of this task. Once the canon was decided, it would be closed forever to preclude any tampering.

In the year 419 AD a second Council of Carthage was convened under the leadership of no less a figure than St. Augustine, a bishop and one of the Fathers of the Church. This council confirmed the canon as approved by the earlier synods and forwarded it to Pope Boniface in Rome. The pope then authorized and promulgated the text and the New Testament became a reality, almost four centuries after Christ.

The New Testament, then, only came into existence because the Catholic Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, declared it so. Written reference to the New Testament's existence or its legitimacy are nowhere to be found in the Bible itself. Instead, these spring solely from the singular authority of the Catholic Church. This same New Testament canon was reaffirmed a millennium later at the Council of Florence in 1442 and the Council of Trent in 1546.

He seems intrigued by the history lesson, so you go for the closer. You delicately explain that in every Bible text he cited earlier, when the writer referred to "scripture" he therefore had to be referring to the Jewish scriptures or what we would call the Old Testament. The New Testament, as you just described, was centuries from being becoming a reality. It follows, then, that your new friend's rigid belief in Bible supremacy puts him in a difficult position. In citing the New Testament, he is actually using a source that is "unbiblical." This means that since there is no place in the Bible that legitimizes or sanctions the validity of the New Testament, he cannot use it to support his own arguments. By declaring the New Testament to be a source of truth he is de facto sanctioning the authority of the Catholic Church.

To aid his understanding, you go on to explain that no thing or person can declare itself a source of authority. Such authority must come from outside itself. To make the point, you use the example of the people making the laws in Washington. They did not simply drive there on their own and begin drafting legislation. They derive their authority through a formal election process authorized by the Constitution. In like manner, police officers do not roam the streets with guns because they like uniforms and

weapons. They are empowered by a city or town charter to carry out their duties and those duties have strict limits and oversight.

The same logic applies with Sacred Scripture. Christ wrote nothing down. A book such as the Bible cannot declare itself authoritative, it must be declared so by something outside itself. That something is the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church compiled, authorized and promulgated the New Testament and, combining it with the Old Testament, created a Bible for all to use. This is the same Catholic Church that suffered the Roman persecutions, preserved the faith through the Dark Ages, fought the Crusades and has survived over 2,000 years with unbroken apostolic succession. It is Christ's only Church, the one St. Paul called the "...pillar and bulwark of truth." (1 Tim 3:15)

His face says it all. Your learned response went far beyond what he was trained to handle. It was not in the script. You did not engage in a duel of scripture phrase for scripture phrase. Rather, you presented a historical perspective, one which he has never heard. In a few minutes, you managed to sow confusion in his comfortable world of biblical supremacy. You can tell he is unable to reconcile using

Sacred Scripture as a conversion tool for his brand of Christianity when every phrase he cites reaffirms the authority of the Catholic Church.

He realizes his conundrum and admits that he has a lot of homework to do. Highly intrigued, he asks if you might be a regular visitor to the park. He goes on to say that he wants to visit with you again in the future. You smile and offer to bring the coffee.

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Trinity of Truth - How to Stay off The Merry Go Round of Speculation about the Second Coming of Christ

By Rev Michael Bresciani

The conservative approach to God and his word has a kind of trinity of truth at the heart of its doctrine. All three parts of this trinity come from the Bible but together they are what can assure us that we have found a true biblical conservatism. It is not always a failsafe and at times may still produce some controversy among the believers, but it is an altogether safer platform from which to start any search for biblical truth and the salvation of God.

The first doctrine in the trinity of truth is found in 2 Peter 3: 16...All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Starting here is to fully recognize the authority, the inspiration and the infallibility of Gods word. This is also the

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best starting point from which to approach all second coming doctrine.

The second part of the doctrinal trinity comes from 2 Peter 1:20...Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation: The opposite of private is public. That means there is a public interpretation among the believers. A consensus or a main stream of thought emerges concerning all Bible interpretation the world over. Just one example would be that while some think that antichrist could be only a spirit or some body politic like the UN, the larger body of Christ (the church) worldwide holds that he is just what scripture says he is...a man.

The third part of the doctrinal trinity, answers why the church arrives at generally the same interpretation all over the world. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you. 1 John 2:27a. The Holy Spirit teaches every believer around the world the same thing, God is not divided against himself. Thus a Spirit taught church says what its Father says, it hears the voice of its Savior, and it doesn't hear every wind of doctrine. The church doesn't cuddle up with every doctrinal new kid on the block. If we were to take the time to do the homework we could see that the main body of the church throughout the world comes up with just about the same interpretation of scripture, not counting the liberal church of course. That single Spirit taught, scripture trusting interpretation is what conservative means. If you stick to the conservative side of second coming doctrine you will find yourself outside of the confusing fray and that is exactly where God wants you to be.

Rev Bresciani is the author of two popular Christian books, one on the second coming of Christ. He has hundreds of articles published both online and in print. Visit the website at

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