

## ON TRADITION, THE APOCRYPHA, AND THE BIBLE

*“By what right do you teach doctrines not found in the Bible?” “Because the origin of our faith is not in the Bible alone, but the Church which gives us both the written and the unwritten word.” – Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question Box*, p. 75.<sup>421</sup>*

### WHAT THEY TEACH

Three Classes of Traditions: Divine, Apostolic, Ecclesiastical  
Two Sources of Authority: Written Word & Unwritten Traditions  
The Apocrypha  
REFUTATION

Their Teachings Concerning Traditions  
Their Teachings Concerning the Apocrypha  
Their Teachings Concerning the Bible

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH’S CLAIM THAT SHE HAS GIVEN THE WORLD THE BIBLE  
REFUTATION

### A. Their Teachings on this Matter

#### I. Three Classes of Traditions.

(1) **The Council of Trent declared in 1546 that the Word of God is contained in both the Bible and traditions, and that both are of equal authority.** What do Catholics mean by tradition? They don’t understand the word the way we do. For example, Robert Bellarmine,<sup>422</sup> a Jesuit writer, divides tradition into three classes:

(a) **Divine tradition.** These were the things that Christ allegedly taught to his apostles and disciples which were not written in the Bible but were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

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<sup>421</sup> Bertrand L. Conway, *Question Box*, 1913 Edition, p. 75; quoted by O. C. Lambert, *Catholicism Against Itself* (Winfield, AL: Fair haven Publishers, 1963, Abridged Edition), 1:22.

<sup>422</sup> Roberto Francesco Romolo Bellarmino (1542-1621), Italian Roman Catholic churchman and theologian and one of the leaders of the Counter-Reformation, was born in Montepulciano, Tuscany, the son of a local magistrate and a nephew of Pope Marcellus II. He entered the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and was ordained a priest in 1570. After 1576 he lectured in Rome on the conflicts arising from the Reformation. His chief work was the multivolume *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei* (Disputations on the Controversies of the Christian Faith, 1568-1593). He also took a prominent part in the revision of the Vulgate published in 1592. Appointed a cardinal in 1599, Bellarmine served as archbishop of Capua from 1602 to 1605. An admirer of Galileo, he defended Galileo's right to publish his writings on the solar system, and was excommunicated by pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) but was “promoted” (or “rehabilitated”?) by pope Clement VIII (1592-1605). Having given all his money for the relief of the poor, Bellarmine died a pauper on September 17, 1621.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Robert Bellarmine.” See also J.N.D. Kelley, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986], p. 275)

**(b) Apostolic tradition.** These were the unwritten teachings of the apostles that were not recorded in the Bible but were -- again!-- handed down by word of mouth.

**(c) Ecclesiastical tradition.** These are the council pronouncements and papal decrees which have accumulated through the centuries.

**(2) It must be noted that the major doctrines of the Roman Catholic church** have been based solely on traditions, such as purgatory, the priesthood, the mass, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, indulgences, penance, worship of Mary, use of images, holy water, rosary beads, celibacy of the priests and nuns, and the papacy. “Even while maintaining a “Scripture-alone” position, however, [Catholic] theologians also held that certain truths or practices (such as infant baptism), although not found in Scripture, were validated by the tradition of the Church. They agreed, moreover, that the solemn decisions of the Church, especially those that were arrived at by the ecumenical councils, were authentic interpretations of Christian doctrine and therefore irrevocably binding on the Church.”<sup>423</sup>

## II. Two Sources of Authority.

**(1) These are the Bible and tradition.**<sup>424</sup> But they also claim that the Church of Rome, being the judge of Scripture, can say with authority what the right interpretation shall be. This in effect gives them three sources of authority: (1) The Bible, (2) the developing tradition and (3) the Roman Catholic Church.

**(2) As Romanism works in actual practice:**

(a) Traditions of the church at any time are what the Catholic Church says they are;

(b) The Scripture means what the Roman Catholic Church says it means;

(c) When the Bible gets into conflict with their supposed tradition, the Bible must be interpreted in the light of tradition, not vice versa;

(d) When both the Bible and tradition get into conflict with their doctrine, what the Roman Catholic church says matters most!

**(3) Catholic writers however admit that traditions cannot be trusted or relied upon.**

(a) This is the reason they invent the dogma of “papal infallibility.” “This infallibility is to control the vagaries of tradition, for tradition by its very nature, tends to exaggeration, as

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<sup>423</sup> MEPS 2005, art. “Roman Catholic Church”

<sup>424</sup> “In reaction to the Protestant insistence during the Reformation on a seemingly unqualified “Scripture-alone” principle, the Council of Trent affirmed (Fourth Session) that Christian revelation was contained in “written books” and in “unwritten traditions”. Although this decree speaks at length and almost exclusively about the Bible, the insertion of the phrase about “unwritten traditions” was interpreted until recently as indicating a “two-source” theory.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Roman Catholic Church”).

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we find in the legends of ancient people. Exaggerated, they destroy themselves, but in the bosom of God's Church these truths forever retain their character unchanged and unchangeable."<sup>425</sup>

(b) One of the most important documents of Catholic history is the **85 Canons or Laws** which formed a part of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>426</sup> It is fraudulent in nature, yet the Catholic hierarchy has not ceased using it to support its teachings. Says the Catholic Dictionary: "*A tradition (accepted because unexamined) long prevailed that these canons were dictated by the Apostles to St. Clement of Rome, who committed them to writing. Accurate research has dispelled this notion.*"<sup>427</sup>

### III. Plus the Apocrypha.

(1) **The Council of Trent also declared the apocrypha as authoritative** and inspired and must therefore be added to the Word of God.

(a) What are the apocrypha? The word comes from the Gr. *apokrupha*, meaning "hidden things," and is used by ecclesiastical writers for matters which are secret or mysterious, unknown in origin, forged, or spurious, unrecognized or uncanonical.<sup>428</sup>

(b) What we call the apocrypha is what the Roman Catholics call the "deuterocanonical books," the word which means "second canon."<sup>429</sup> They include the following books and portions of books: (1) 1 Esdras, (2) 2 Esdras, (3) Tobit, (4) Judith, (5) Additions to the Book of Esther (Esther 10:4-10), (6) Wisdom of Solomon, (7) Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), (8) Baruch, (9) Letter of Jeremiah, (10) The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men (Daniel 3:24-90), (11) Susanna (Daniel 13), (12) Bell and the Dragon (Daniel 14), (13) 1 Maccabees, (14) 2 Maccabees. These books were included in the Septuagint

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<sup>425</sup> *Explanation of Catholic Morals*, p. 69. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:58

<sup>426</sup> "*Apostolic Constitutions*, collection of eight books containing ecclesiastical directives supposedly composed by the 12 apostles and transmitted by them to Clement I of Rome. The books contain comprehensive rules for the Christian life. The first six books are similar in content to a 3rd-century work known as the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Part of the seventh book contains material based on the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, or *Didache*, written in the 2nd century. The eighth book includes the 85 canons, considered the most valuable part of the *Constitutions*. All eight books were probably compiled and edited by one author, sometimes referred to as *Pseudo-Clement*, probably of Syrian origin, and with tendencies towards Arianism. Historians estimate the date of composition as between AD 340 and 400." (MEPS 2005, "*Apostolic Constitutions*").

<sup>427</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, pp. 41, 42; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:59.

<sup>428</sup> "Apocrypha (Greek *apokryphos*, "hidden"), word coined by the 5th-century biblical scholar St Jerome for the biblical books received by the Church of his time as part of the Greek version of the Old Testament (see Septuagint), but that were not included in the Hebrew Bible. In the Authorized, or King James, Version, the books are either printed as an appendix or are omitted altogether; they are not considered canonical by Protestants." (MEPS 2005, art. "Apocrypha").

<sup>429</sup> "The Apocrypha are books of the Old Testament included in Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles as deuterocanonical (added to the earlier canon) but excluded from the Hebrew Bible and from most Protestant Bibles. Except for 2 Esdras, which was in Latin, they were part of the Septuagint. (GME 2000, art. "Apocrypha"). See also MEPS 2005, art. "Apocrypha".

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Bible by Hellenistic Jews, but were excluded from the canon by the non-Hellenistic Jews.<sup>430</sup>

(c) What the Roman Catholics call the “apocrypha” are what the Protestants call the pseudepigrapha.<sup>431</sup> These are the New Testament apocryphal books,<sup>432</sup> sometimes known as pseudonymous books, that were never included in the Roman Catholic Bible. Evidently, the Council of Trent selected only those books that would help them in their controversy with the reformers, and the New Testament apocrypha showed no such promise.

(d) The British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1827, ruled against the inclusion of the apocrypha (the so-called “deuterocanonical books”) in its Bibles, and the American Bible Society followed that example.

### REFUTATION:

#### **I. Concerning Traditions:**

**(1) Firstly, it must be said that traditions are not reliable,** since a story never retains (or seldom retains?) its original character without addition, subtraction, or exaggeration. Read for example John 21:21-23.

**(2) Catholic authors have consistently affirmed that traditions cannot be trusted** (which is one reason the Roman Catholic Church needs an infallible pope):

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<sup>430</sup> “The Apocrypha are important sources for Jewish history and religious developments in the 1st and 2d centuries” (GME 2000, art. “Apocrypha”). “With the growth of a historical perspective in biblical studies during the 19th century, the value of the Apocrypha as historical sources came to be generally recognized. Derived from the period 300 BC to New Testament times, the Apocrypha shed valuable light on the period between the end of the Old Testament narrative and the opening of the New Testament. They are also important sources of information on the development of belief in immortality, the resurrection, and other questions of eschatology, as well as the increasing impact of Hellenistic ideas on Judaism.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Apocrypha”).

<sup>431</sup> “Roman Catholics and Protestants use the term Apocrypha differently when referring to biblical literature; both, however, refer to the same books when they speak of the Apocryphal New Testament.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Apocryphal New Testament”). “Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians still follow the Septuagint and include in the canon of the Bible all the Apocrypha, except the two books of Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. They generally refer to the Protestant Apocrypha as deuterocanonical books, however, and reserve the term Apocrypha for those books entirely outside the biblical canon, which Protestants call the Pseudepigrapha” (MEPS 2005, art. “Apocrypha”).

<sup>432</sup> “Apocryphal New Testament (Greek apokryphos, “hidden”), title that refers to more than 100 books written by Christian authors between the 2nd and 4th centuries. The books have two characteristics in common: (1) in general form they resemble New Testament writings, many of them falling into the literary categories of gospel, acts, letter, and apocalypse; (2) they belong neither to the New Testament canon nor to the writings of the recognized Fathers of the Church.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Apocryphal New Testament”). The term “pseudepigrapha” (from Greek pseudepigraphos, “falsely ascribed”) [refers to] Jewish and Christian writings that appeared in the latter days of the Old Testament and continued well into Christian times; they were attributed by their authors to great religious figures and authorities of the past” (MEPS 2005, art. “Pseudepigrapha”).

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(a) *“This infallibility is to control the vagaries of tradition, for tradition by its very nature, tends to exaggeration, as we find in the legends of ancient people. Exaggerated, they destroy themselves, but in the bosom of God’s Church these truths forever retain their character unchanged and unchangeable.”*<sup>433</sup>

(b) There is a collection of 85 Canons or Laws which really form a part of the ***Apostolic Constitutions***, one of the most important bogus documents of Catholic history.<sup>434</sup> The Catholic hierarchy has not ceased using it to support its teachings. It is fraudulent in nature. Says the Catholic Dictionary: *“A tradition (accepted because unexamined) long prevailed that these canons were dictated by the Apostles to St. Clement of Rome, who committed them to writing. Accurate research has dispelled this notion.”*<sup>435</sup>

**(3) Since no one can rely on some men’s words, and since the Lord does not want us to anchor our hopes on something that cannot be relied upon,** He had caused His will to be written. What is written can be investigated (cf. Acts 17:11).

**(4) When a Roman Catholic priest vows to interpret the Scriptures** only “according to the unanimous consent of the fathers” (meaning “traditions”), he vows to explain the Bible according to pure myths. There is no such thing as “unanimous consent of the fathers” on certain Catholic doctrines. For instance:

(a) Augustine, the greatest of the Catholic fathers, wrote in later life a special book in which he set forth his **Retractions**. Evidently he had taught some things he now felt sorry about.

(b) Gregory the Great denounced as anti-Christian the assumption of the title “universal bishop.” Boniface III, however, took such title. (Here are two popes, two interpreters, who did not think the same way about the “papacy”).

(c) Even the Catholic Encyclopedia is replete with examples of Catholic fathers who had been condemned for their errors by their fellow Catholics. For instance, pope Agatho (678-681) condemned pope Honorius (625-638) for favoring the doctrine of monothelism 40 years after the latter died!<sup>436</sup> Lambert says, *“All the popes, for two hundred years after*

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<sup>433</sup> *Explanation of Catholic Morals*, p. 69. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:58

<sup>434</sup> “Apostolic Constitutions, collection of eight books containing ecclesiastical directives supposedly composed by the 12 apostles and transmitted by them to Clement I of Rome... All eight books were probably compiled and edited by one author, sometimes referred to as Pseudo-Clement, probably of Syrian origin, and with tendencies towards Arianism. Historians estimate the date of composition as between AD 340 and 400.” (MEPS 2005, “Apostolic Constitutions”).

<sup>435</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, pp. 41, 42. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:59.

<sup>436</sup> “Honorius I (died 638), pope (625-638), who was posthumously declared a heretic. Born in the Campania region of Italy, he was son of the consul Petronius. As pope, Honorius was interested in the evangelization of the Anglo-Saxons, bestowing upon the archbishops of Canterbury and York the pallium—a vestment symbolic of the fullness of episcopal authority. He also persuaded the Celtic Christians to adopt the Roman liturgy and date of Easter. Honorius gained considerable influence over the government of Italy by wisely administering the financial affairs of the papacy, but he is chiefly remembered for his involvement in the

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*Honorius, were sworn against him as a heretic, when they were installed (Catholic Dictionary, 409). Three ecumenical councils: the sixth, seventh, eighth, condemned him as a heretic although he was not condemned while he lived.”*<sup>437</sup>

Where then is unanimity here? Says George M. Searle, Catholic writer: “*And history shows too plainly that the Church in their sense of the term, has varied in its doctrine, taught dogmas at various places at the same time, inconsistent with each other, and therefore to a considerable extent erroneous.*”<sup>438</sup>

### **(5) The witness of the Scriptures is against traditions, not in favor of it.**

(a) Paul warns against it, saying, “*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.*” (Colossians 2:8).

(b) The Lord says traditions make void the word of God (Matthew 15:3, 6, 9).

(c) Traditions of men have been responsible for vain conduct of men (1 Peter 1:18).

(d) Evidently, the Christians are to be wary about traditions, and compare them by the Word. The word of Jesus shall be the judge in the last day (John 12:48).

### **(6) On the other hand, the Thessalonians were told by Paul to cling to the traditions taught them by word or by epistles (2 Thessalonians 2:15).**

(a) Paul also commanded the Thessalonians to disfellowship the brethren (“mark them”) who do not walk according to the traditions that he has taught them (2 Thess. 3:6-15).

(b) At one time Paul also sent Timothy to remind the disciples of his ways in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:17) which he also teaches in every church. What he teaches in one church is certainly what he also teaches in other churches (1 Corinthians 16:1). Conformity in doctrine, by word or by writing, from one church to another, is not only the by-product of apostolic inspiration; it is the signature of one who claims to be sent by God.

(c) Now, the apostles’ spoken words were traditions. Their written words were also traditions (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14). Since both came from the same source, surely, the traditions that came by word would not contradict that which came by their epistles.

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Monothelite controversy. Asked his opinion about Monothelitism—the heretical doctrine which asserted that Christ had only one will, although he had two natures—Honorius responded in a letter with words that seemed to support the heresy. The Third Council of Constantinople in 680, 42 years after his death, declared both Honorius and the letter heretical. During the 19th-century controversies over papal infallibility, Roman Catholic scholars generally agreed that Honorius did not condone Monothelitism but rather made a careless choice of language in addressing the controversy.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Honorius I”). See also J. N. D. Kelley, *The Oxford dictionary of Popes*, 71; O. C. Lambert, 1:28.

<sup>437</sup> O. C. Lambert, 1:28.

<sup>438</sup> George M. Searle, *Plain Facts*, p. 34. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:58. Unabridged Edition.

(d) The apostles were inspired men (John 16:13; 14:26; 15:26). Furthermore, God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). It is axiomatic then that the teachings that came by word should essentially be the same as those that came through the epistles. Those apostolic traditions are now written, and they are in the Bible. These then are the traditions we could cling to, not the ones that came through the fertile imaginations of the Catholics. Catholics ought to make a test of their traditions even by their Bibles and they will see that their traditions make void the word of God (Matthew 15:6).

## II. Concerning the Apocrypha:

(1) **The witness of the Jews was against the apocrypha.** Unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:1, 2). Those oracles never included the apocrypha. What oracles were committed to them? Those included the books that we now have. The world calls those oracles “the Jewish Scriptures.” About 90 A.D., Josephus, the noted Jewish historian, gave a list of books of the Jewish law and the prophets, but did not include in the list the apocryphal books that we now see in the Catholic Bibles.

(2) **What about the witness of Jesus and the apostles?** Neither Christ nor the apostles ever referred to, or quoted from, the apocrypha for their teaching or writing. Didn't the Catholics say that all the writers of the New Testament were Catholics, and that even Christ himself was a Catholic? Here then are “Catholics” (and inspired men at that!) who have no sympathy with the cause of the Catholics!

(3) **The witness of the early Catholic scholarship is against the apocrypha.** For example, Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate (the official Roman Catholic Bible), declared emphatically that the apocrypha was no part of the Old Testament scriptures. It was Jerome who coined the word “Apocrypha” (Greek *apokryphos*, “hidden”) “for the biblical books received by the Church of his time as part of the Greek version of the Old Testament (see Septuagint), but that were not included in the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>439</sup>

Even Gregory the Great declared one apocryphal book, the 1 Maccabees, as uncanonical.<sup>440</sup> Cardinal Ximenez who made his polyglot translation<sup>441</sup> excluded the apocrypha from it, and his work was approved by Leo X.

(4) **Are the apocrypha the word of God? Try and see.** They do not have the ring of inspiration like the Bible; not even one of them claims to be inspired; in fact, they even disclaimed inspiration. What then is their value? Nothing, as far as I am concerned. As religious novels or pious fiction, they abound with repetitious and trivial details. As theology, they contain doctrines that are unscriptural, stories that are fantastic and incredible. They justify falsehood and deception and teaches salvation by works of merit. As history, they contain errors of facts, geographically, and chronologically. If I may say

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<sup>439</sup> MEPS 2005, art. “Apocrypha.”

<sup>440</sup> Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 83.

<sup>441</sup> A polyglot translation is a Bible translation in many tongues.

so, they are examples of mediocrity the Roman Catholic Church wants to pass on as a classic.

### III. Concerning the Bible:

What is the witness of the Bible about itself?

**1) Firstly, The Bible is something that the apocrypha are not.**

- (a) The Bible claims to be inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- (b) It is the word that came out of God's mouth (Matthew 4:4).
- (c) It is a book for the spirits on matters spiritual.
- (d) It bears witness to Christ (John 5:39).
- (e) It is able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).
- (f) If man needed a guide, it holds the promise of giving light (Psalm 119:105).
- (g) It is compared to a lamp shining in the darkness (2 Peter 1:19).
- (h) The word hidden in the heart keeps man from sin (Psalm 119:11).

**(2) Secondly, It is a book that does not tolerate discord.** "If they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). See also Revelation 22:18-19.

**(3) In the early days of Christianity, apocryphal books were already in circulation,** but it seems the Berean Jews never took time to examine them (Acts 17:11). There is no blessedness that awaits those who read the apocrypha and hear it or keep the word of it (Revelation 1:3).

#### **B. The Catholic Church claims she has given the world the Bible.**

This is not true. Firstly, there is no mention of the Roman Catholic Church even in the Catholic Bible. Secondly, none of the writers of the epistles were Catholics of the Romanist kind. Thirdly, the Word came from God (cf. Matthew 4:4; 2 Samuel 23:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). How can the Roman Catholic Church give something she has not produced? She even refused to allow her people to read it, as proven by the following quotations from their writings:

- (1) *"In early times, the Bible was read freely by lay people... New dangers came in during the Middle Ages... To meet these evils, the Council of Toulouse (1229) and Tarragona (1234) forbade the laity to read the vernacular translations of the Bible. Pius IV [1559-1565?] required bishops to refuse lay persons leave to read even Catholic versions of*



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*Scripture unless their confessors or parish priests judged such reading was likely to prove beneficial.*”<sup>442</sup>

(2) Catholic theologians and writers aver, “*The very nature of the Bible ought to prove to any thinking man the impossibility of its being the one safe method to find out what the Saviour taught.*”<sup>443</sup>

(3) The Bible, they say, is not a clear statement of the Christ’s teaching. “*There is nowhere in the New Testament a clear, methodical statement of the teaching of Christ.*”<sup>444</sup>

(4) They say it is impossible to find Christ in the Bible. “*Again, it has ever been practically impossible for men, generally, to find out Christ from the Bible only.*”<sup>445</sup>

(5) Catholics not required to believe the Bible. “*The unshrinking defense of the Holy Scriptures, however, does not require us that we should equally uphold all the opinions which each of the Fathers or the more recent interpreters have put forth in explaining it; for it may be that, in commenting on the passages where physical matters occur, they have sometimes expressed the ideas of their own times, and thus made statements which in these days have been abandoned as incorrect.*”<sup>446</sup>

(6) There was far more extensive use of the Bible in the early church than in the Catholic Church. “*There was far more extensive and continuous use of Scriptures in the public service of the early church than there is among us.*”<sup>447</sup>

(7) The Bible, they say, is a dead letter. “*The Scripture indeed is a divine book but it is a dead letter, which has to be explained.*”<sup>448</sup>

(8) Roman Catholicism is not in the Bible. “*By what right do you teach doctrines not found in the Bible?*” “*Because the origin of our faith is not in the Bible alone, but the Church which gives us both the written and the unwritten word.*”<sup>449</sup>

(9) For 400 years, no book was used but the Bible. “*Through most of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the controversy with the Arians had turned upon Scripture, and appeals to past authority were few.*”<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, page. 82.

<sup>443</sup> *Question Box*, 1913 Edition, p. 67; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:20.

<sup>444</sup> *Question Box*, 1913 Edition, p. 66; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:20.

<sup>445</sup> *Question Box*, 1913 Edition, p. 70; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:21.

<sup>446</sup> *Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII*, 295.

<sup>447</sup> *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 509. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:19.

<sup>448</sup> *Our Priesthood*, p. 155; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:22.

<sup>449</sup> *Question Box*, 1913 Edition, p. 75; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:22.

<sup>450</sup> *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6:2; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:19.