

## Authority and Use of the Early Church Fathers

Bible	Roman Catholic Church
<p>Deuteronomy 17:11 "According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left."</p> <p>Isaiah 8:20 "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."</p> <p>Luke 16:29 "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."</p> <p>Matthew 22:29 "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."</p> <p>John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."</p> <p>1 John 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."</p> <p>Acts 17:2, 11 "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures...These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."</p> <p>2 Peter 1:19 "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"</p> <p>See also: Matthew 4:4,6-7; 15:3; John 10:34-35; Acts 18:28; Acts 26:22</p>	<p>"(the Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament--seeing that one God is the author of both --as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession."</p> <p><a href="#">Council of Trent, Fourth Session, Decree 1</a></p> <p>"Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; <b>or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers</b>"</p> <p><a href="#">-Council of Trent, Session 4, Decree 2</a></p>

### 1) The Truth:

#### (1) Who are the church fathers?

- (a) First Century after Apostles (A.D. 90-99): Ignatius and Polycarp
- (b) Second Century (A.D. 100-199): Justin Martyr and Irenaeus
- (c) Third Century (A.D. 200-299): Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyprian, Arnobius, and Lactantius
- (d) Fourth Century (A.D. 300-399): Athanasius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Hilary of Pontiers, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphanius, and John Chrysostom
- (e) Fifth Century (A.D. 400-499): Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Hilary of Arles, Prosper of Aquitania, and Leo I.
- (f) Sixth Century (A.D. 500-599): Fulgentius the African, Gelasius (Cyzicus), Gregory the Great, among others

#### (2) Reformation Use of the Fathers: a witness to the truth, and sometimes, ancient error; a vote of consent, but not absolutely authoritative. They have the same derived authority as ministers.

2) Advantage for the Roman Catholic Church to hold this position against the Bible: the Roman Catholic Church believes that their doctrines have majority or unanimous consent in doctrines that are disputed with us; therefore, they charge the Reformed church as ahistorical and lacking a succession of consent in the church. However, our doctors have taken this charge seriously and have proven that every disputed doctrine between them and us has various witnesses of the early church fathers on each side. For example, many of the doctrines anathematized by the Roman Catholic Church were held by various church fathers, shewing that the Roman Catholic Church cherry picks the church fathers to gain a feigned consent.

Question: Where did our doctors prove these things?

Answer: Myriads are still locked up in Latin, however, the best that I have found are in the following works:

1. Andre Rivet, [Critici Sacri Libri IV](#) (1642)
2. John Daille, [A treatise concerning the right use of the Fathers, in the decision of the controversies that are this day in religion](#) (1675)
  - a. [Article summarizing Daille's First part of the Book](#)
  - b. [Article summarizing Daille's Second part of the Book](#)

3) Select Witnesses of Church Fathers for the Bible teaching (a myriad could have been listed):

Church Father	Source	Quote
Augustine	From <i>Letter 82</i> , "To Jerome"	"I confess to thy love that I have learned to give this reverence and honor to those books of Scripture alone which are now called canonical, as firmly to believe that no one of their authors erred in writing anything...but I so read the others, that however excellent in purity of doctrine, I do not therefore take a thing to be true because they thought so; but because they can persuade me, either through those canonical authors, or probably reason, that it does not differ from the truth. Nor do I think that you wish your books to be read as if they were the writings of the prophets or apostles, which beyond a doubt are free from any error"
Augustine	From <i>Contra Faustum Manichaeum</i> 11.5	"There (in the Bible) if anything strikes me as absurd, it is not lawful to say the author of this book held not the truth; but either the Codex is faulty or the interpreter has erred or you do not understand. But in the productions of those who lived afterwards, which are contained in numberless books, but in no way equal to the most sacred excellence of the canonical Scriptures, even in whatever one of these equal truth is found, yet their authority is far unequal."
Augustine	From <i>Contra Cresconium</i> 2.32	"I am not bound by the authority of this epistle because I do not account the writings of Cyprian as canonical Scriptures, but I consider them out of the canonical Scriptures and whatsoever in them agreeth not, I refuse it with his leave."
Jerome	From <i>Letter 62</i> "Ad Tranquillanum"	"Origen should be read occasionally, as Tertullian, Novatus and Arnobius, and some ecclesiastical writers, so that we may extract what is good from them and shun the opposite, according to the apostle's direction, prove all things, hold fast that which is good."
Cyril	From <i>Catechetical Lectures</i>	"Do not attend to my fluent comments for possibly you may be deceived; but unless you receive the testimony of the prophets to each particular, you must not believe my words."