

1. Tradition is NOT a **Telephone Game** (a.k.a. *Operator*). The rules of the Telephone Game are:

1. Pick an unfamiliar sentence.
2. Whisper it from person to person.
3. Say the message only once.
4. Prohibit questions.
5. Put nothing in writing.
6. Play the game in a sufficiently noisy environment so that only one person hears the message.
7. Do not check to make sure the message has been received correctly. *The whole point of the game is to see how garbled the message will become as it goes from person to person.*

It is clear that there is *some* garbling in the minor details of the Scriptures. **Whenever a story is told twice in the Bible, it is told differently** (*Moleski's Conjecture*). Some differences can be harmonized, others can't.

2. Some Protestants have a **Pipeline Theory** of revelation: "God wrote it; I read it; that settles it." They think that God's truth was dropped into the Scriptures from Heaven and pops straight out of the Bible in our own day, untouched by human interpretations. But if that is the case, why are there more than 25,000 Bible churches, with new ones being invented every week? Unless people have the same *principles of interpretation (hermeneutics, exegesis)*, they won't get the same message out of the same texts. The pipeline theory also fails to explain the inconsistencies in the Scriptural data.
3. The **Organic Model of Revelation** emphasizes the developmental nature of Judeo-Christian faith. God plants **seeds of revelation** that change as they grow--but they change in a way that is *consistent with their nature*. In each stage of organic growth, the living being preserves the DNA which guides the entire process. This model explains why Christianity looks so different when the images found in the New Testament are compared to the later versions found in history. **If the seed remains unchanged, it is dead; its purpose in life is to grow**. If the Church had remained in the form it first took in first-century Palestine, it would be dead, not authentic Christianity. People who want to "go back to the beginning" don't understand that the purpose of the beginning was to start the process of development that has led to the (relatively) mature Church we know today.
4. The Church has used **Error-Correcting Protocols** to guide the process of development and to keep it true to the genetic blueprint God inscribed in Jesus, the seed of the Church. Computer systems use communications protocols to make sure that material that is sent is correctly received. **They are authoritarian systems**. If an error is detected in a transmission, the receiver will reject the packet and ask for a retry. Most internet communications are governed by **TCP/IP** (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol): "IP is inherently unreliable, so TCP protects against data loss, data corruption, packet reordering and data duplication by adding checksums and sequence numbers to transmitted data and, on the receiving side, sending back packets that acknowledge the receipt of data" (<http://www.faqs.org/faqs/internet/tcp-ip/tcp-ip-faq/part1/>).

Long before the development of computer science and information theory, the Church adopted strategies that allowed the message of Jesus to be **transmitted intact** from one generation to the next in an extremely noisy (*sinful!*) environment. The Church:

1. Developed **creeds--dogmatic propositions** that could be defined and memorized.
2. Preached the message aloud and in **public**.
3. **Repeated** its basic message continually (Jesus is always **the same**: Heb 13:8).
4. Allowed itself to be **questioned** by any honest inquirers either from within the community or from without. We can't answer all questions; we *can* meet all objections (that's the purpose of *apologetics*).
5. Put its basic beliefs in **writing** (Scripture, the decrees of the councils, papal encyclicals, etc.).
6. Created a **sacred environment** within which to share the message with the faithful.
7. Always **checks to make sure the message has been received correctly**. *The whole point of the authority of the Church is to see that the DEPOSIT OF FAITH (what Jesus revealed to the apostles) does not become garbled as it goes from person to person.* The doctrine of **apostolic succession** teaches that **the bishops are the successors of the apostles**. The authorized teachers of the Church are **ordained men** (bishops, priests, and deacons); no one gets ordained unless they give good evidence that they know, believe, and can teach the faith.

**The Judas Principle:** *Jesus is betrayed in every generation by some who have been chosen to be His special representatives. If even He could not guarantee the lasting fidelity of all twelve of His chosen representatives, it is not surprising that the Church is betrayed by those who have promised to serve her faithfully. Corruptio ultimi pessima: corruption of the best is the worst. Nevertheless, if we can condemn the traitors, it shows that we have received the message of revelation intact.*

The letters of St. Paul have two lists of gifts, both headed by the gift of apostleship. *When Jesus ascended into Heaven, He left a body, not a book!* Note well that these lists of gifts do not include the category of "author" in them.

1 Cor 12:28	Eph 4:11
One Body with many gifts:	Gifts for building up the body:
apostles	apostles
prophets	prophets
teachers	evangelists
workers of miracles	<i>pastors</i>
healers	teachers
helpers	"... so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming" (Eph 4:14)
<i>administrators</i>	
speakers in various kinds of tongues	

The Church's understanding of the **office of bishop** is that the bishops are the *heirs and successors* of the apostles. The offices of **priests** and **deacons** are developments of the role of the bishop--the bishop's authority is vested in and delegated to the lower orders. These three **Holy Orders** (*bishop, priest, and deacon*) preserve the gifts of evangelization, teaching, and administration; the miraculous gifts have never been institutionalized, although the Church expects miracles as a confirmation of sanctity.

It is a matter of fact that the chain of **apostolic succession** has never been broken in the Roman Catholic Church; there is no period in history in which there were no bishops left. The Church has never had to be re-created from scratch. The pastoral gifts are found in every age of the Church.

The **papacy** is a special development within the office of bishop. The Pope is the **Bishop of Rome**. He is not *ordained* to the papacy the way that bishops, priests, and deacons are *ordained* in the sacrament of Holy Orders. The Bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter and therefore inherits the special role of Peter within the "college" (group) of other successors of the apostles (Mt. 16:18-19). Paul also died in Rome during the same persecution in which Peter died, so the pope also inherits some of St. Paul's charisma even though Paul was not the Bishop of Rome.

"**Pope**" and "**papacy**" derive from the Greek name given to all bishops, *pappas*, which means "father." The more restricted association with the Bishop of Rome seems to have developed in the second or third century. Bishops of Rome claimed authority over other bishops in a number of conflicts beginning with Clement in 95 AD, who tried to establish a universal date for Good Friday and Easter (some churches followed the Johannine scheme and others the synoptic).

The first successors to Peter are listed in the first Eucharistic Prayer in the Roman rite: Linus, Cletus, Clement. Sixtus is the sixth successor of Peter.

Following the lead of Vatican II, I think of the faith as deriving from a single source, the **Deposit of Faith**, which was given both orally and tacitly by Jesus to the first disciples, and which, in turn, *developed* into what we now call Tradition and the New Testament. In my view, the New Testament is best understood as a development of Tradition and not an alternative to it; it is a sacred and privileged *form* of Tradition.

The authority of the Old Testament is quite different from that of the New Testament, since those sacred texts precede the decisive revelation given in Jesus. The authority of the Old Testament is not negligible. The first scriptures created the religious context within which Jesus became human, and Jesus relied on Old Testament Scriptures to define Himself, but (as in the case of the decision recorded in Acts 15), the New Testament creates a decisive framework for *re-interpreting* the revelation given in the Old Testament.