



Authority of Scripture and Tradition

Catholic Truth League
Friday Apologetics
2007 Anno Domini

When Martin Luther divorced himself from Christ's Church he formulated a new theological principle known as sola scripture meaning that scripture alone is the final authority of Christian doctrine. Since Luther's time, this principle has become the definitive principle adopted by protestants today. The circular reasoning and chaos introduced by this principle is very easy to reveal. The Bible contains no table of contents, and it is only by the Sacred Apostolic Tradition of the Church that we can be assured that the Bible consists of the books inspired by God. Sola scriptura is self-refuting because the Bible itself doesn't teach sola scriptura (Jn 21:25, 1 Thess 2:13, Mt 23:1). The chaos of sola scriptura results from the subjective interpretation of scripture apart from a definitive teaching authority grounded in Sacred Tradition. This is evident by the enormous amount of different protestant denominations with differing doctrines all based upon the Bible alone. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia (2001), there are over 33,000 protestant denominations with a net increase of between 270 and 300 denominations every year. Clearly an authoritative interpreter of scripture must provide unity of Christian doctrine.

Quick Scripture

1 Cor 11:2 – hold fast to traditions I handed on
2 Thess 2:15 – hold fast to traditions, oral or by letter
2 Thess 3:6 – shun those acting not according to trad.
Jn 21:25 – not everything Jesus said recorded in Script
Acts 20:35 – Paul records Jesus saying not in gospels

Church Fathers

St Athanasius (360 AD) : "let us note that the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, was preached by the Apostles, and was preserved by the Fathers. On this was the Church founded; and if anyone departs from this, he neither is nor any longer ought to be called a Christian..." *Four Letters to Serapion of Thmuis* 1,28.
Origen (c. 230 AD) "The teaching of the Church has indeed been handed down through an order of succession from the Apostles, and remains in the Churches even to the present time. That alone is to be believed as the truth which is in no way at

Common Objections:

1. The Bible alone is the sole source of Truth.
2. Jesus condemns tradition in Mt 15:3 and Mk 7:9. Traditions are just excess baggage that add to a simple gospel message!

Catholic Response:

1. Where does the Bible claim that it is the sole source of Truth? Often the response to this question will be 2 Timothy 3:16, which says that scripture (Old Testament) is inspired and useful for teaching, but it doesn't say that it is the only source of Christian doctrine. Why do you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God? Many gospels, letters, and writings were considered when the canon (included books) of the Bible was decided by the Church in the late 4th and early 5th century, but many were rejected. Believing that the books present in the Bible are in fact inspired by God is to believe in the Sacred Tradition of the Church that the Bible is inspired by God.
2. The tradition condemned in the gospels of Matthew and Mark are human traditions contrary to the commandment of God, not inspired Sacred Tradition handed down by the Apostles. Sacred Tradition is praised in many places throughout the Bible including 1 Cor 11:2, 2 Thess 2:15, and 2 Thess 3:6 where we are even told to shun those acting not according to tradition.