



March 3rd, 2009 - Topic #1

The Matthew 16:18 Group

*Who Says So? - Solo Scriptura and my right to interpret the Bible*

- I. The Basic Problem of Christianity Unity:
  - A. Who Says So?
  - B. Who's In Charge Here?
  
- II. What is sola scriptura and private interpretation?
  - A. The doctrine- seven key features:
    1. The Bible *alone* is the sole authority and truth for Christianity.
    2. The teaching authority of Christian tradition and the Church is rejected.
    3. That the Bible basically is perspicuous (able to be clearly understood) in and of itself .
    4. That in the important and central matters of doctrine the Bible leads to *unity*
    5. That Jesus promise to give us the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth and therefore, I have the right to interpret scripture as the Holy Spirit leads me.
    6. A rejection of solo scriptura is a rejection of Christianity itself, and possibly sinful.
    7. When the New Testament cannon was closed, all apostolic tradition ceased and everything that was needed to know about Christian truth was fond in the scriptures.
  
- III. Protestant presuppositions that supported self interpretation:
  - A. Self interpretation is needed based on human experience
    1. Men are sinful and we don't want a religion of men.
    2. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely- don't give this power to the priests.
  
  - B. Protestant freedom of conscios is valued more that both unity and certainty of doctrinal truth.
    1. We don't bow to the King of England
    2. We don't bow to the Pope
    3. And we have an inalienable right to our own pursuit of happiness.

C. That the early Church and the New Testament teaches solo scriptura.

1. The Catholic Church corrupted this doctrine with it's Popes and man-made traditions.
2. Luther and the early fathers restored the Bible to it's rightful positions.

IV. My Crisis:

- A. Denominational bewilderment looking for what my Lord wanted me to believe
- B. Shock of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin's early dispute over the real presence
- C. Teaching of Scott Hahn

V. The doctrine rests on four lead scriptures:

- A. 2 Tim 3:16
- B. John 16:13
- C. 1 John 2:20-27
- D. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 13:10

VI. The doctrine fails when closely looked at. It fails for the following reasons:

- ✓ It's not logical and reasonable
- ✓ It's not biblical
- ✓ It's not historical
- ✓ It's not practical
- ✓ It's been a disaster for Christian unity and leads to spiritual

A. Fails on Logic:

1. The doctrine is a classic case of circular reasoning, in that the premise depends on the truth of the very matter in question as expressed below:

Only the scripture speaks God's truth.

***On what authority does that rest on?***

The authority of this rests on scripture.

***Well, what is the authority backing scripture?***

God's truth.

*Or*

2. I have the right to interpret scripture's meaning.

***On what authority do you believe this?***

Because the Holy Spirit leads me into all truth

***How do you know this?***

Because the scripture's tell me so.

***How do you know you are interpreting scripture properly?***

Because the Holy Spirit leads me in all truth.

B. Fails on Biblical Grounds:

1. Where in the bible does it specifically and clearly teach that the New Testament *alone* is the basis of all Christian truth?

**2 Tim 3:16** supports much about scripture but not sola scripture. Sufficient equipping is not exclusive doctrine. This is the only verse that could come close to supporting it and one simply can not base an entire foundation of Christian truth on one verse.

2. Where in the Bible is the canon authenticated?

- a. Clearly the very fact that Scripture itself does not self authenticate the canon proves that the statement “ Only the Bible is the source of truth” is false. Why? Because you have to go *outside* the Bible---to some other authority ( history, tradition, the councils of the Catholic Church) to know what belongs *in* the Bible. Further the Bible itself does not list the criteria for determining the truth of it’s own contents- i.e. what determines if a book is inspired or not inspired by God? For this you have to look outside the Bible. The Scripture in opposition

(1) **2 Peter 1:20.** if the Bible is perspicuous, then what is there a need for interpretation?

(2) If the Bible gives us a right to self interpretation what is the Eunuch asking for **Acts 8:15** ?

(3) Yet , the scripture teaches tradition and sees it as a clear role and guide , working with the written word to lead us:

(a) **2 Peter 1:16-18** – Peter got it handed down from Christ

(b) **2 Peter 3:2**-It was then handed down to the apostles

(c) It has been delivered by oral tradition to the Saints **Jude 3,9,14-15**

(d) And tradition is a key role- **2 Thess 2:15** , **1 Cor15:2-3**, **2 Tim 1:13** and **2 Tim2:2**

- b. Most importantly—Jesus himself taught the Jews to obey oral traditions. In **Matt 23:2** Jesus is clear that the people should obey the rulers based on tradition.
- c. What does the bible say is the pillar and foundation of the truth? **1Tim 3:15** It’s the church---not the scriptures.
- d. In the book of Ephesians how is the manifold wisdom of God revealed?  
**Eph 3:10.**

## VII. It Fails on Historic Grounds:

### A. **Irenaeus** writes as if he was anticipating proto-Protestants:

"When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition...It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture or tradition" (Against Heresies 3,2:1).

"Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?" (Against Heresies 3,4:1).

**B. Gregory of Nyssa** (c.A.D. 335-394), brother of St. Basil the Great, Doctor of the Catholic Church and bishop of Nyssa writes: "[F]or it is enough for proof of our statement, that the TRADITION has come down to us from our fathers, handed on, like some inheritance, by succession from the apostles and the saints who came after them. They, on the other hand, who change their doctrines to this novelty, would need the support of arguments in abundance, if they were about to bring over to their views, not men light as dust, and unstable, but men of weight and steadiness: but so long as their statement is advanced without being established, and without being proved, who is so foolish and so brutish as to account the teaching of the evangelists and apostles, and of those who have successively shone like lights in the churches, of less force than this undemonstrated nonsense?" (Against Eunomius,4:6).

**C. St. Basil the Great** (A.D. 329-379), Doctor of the Catholic Church, bishop of Caesarea, and brother St. Gregory of Nyssa's writes: "Of the dogmas and kerygmas preserved in the Church, some we possess from written teaching and others we receive from the tradition of the Apostles, handed on to us in mystery. In respect to piety both are of the same force. No one will contradict any of these, no one, at any rate, who is even moderately versed in manners ecclesiastical. Indeed, were we to try to reject the unwritten customs as having no great authority, we would unwittingly injure the Gospel in its vitals; or rather, we would reduce kerygma to a mere term" (Holy Spirit 27:66).

VIII. It Fails on Practical Grounds:

- A. The Bible depends on the authority of the Church to authorize the canon, how then when that same Church that infallibility chose the books of the Bible, at the very same counsel declared tradition and Magisterium interpretation to be infallible we reject that doctrine?
- B. How is it that for 359 years there was no Bible yet truth was distributed and discerned?
- C. It assumes Bibles are available, all Christians are literate, they have good study skills, have solid support materials, and good deductive reasoning powers.
- D. And how is it that for over 1400 years not one single counsel of the Church, not one church father and not one theologian ever taught this doctrine until Martin Luther ?

IX. It's Been a disaster for Christianity:

- A. The Eucharist- central teaching is muddled and confused.
- B. Thousands upon thousands of separate denominations
- C. All are Bible believers but each believe something different about that Bible.
- D. Every man his own church, every man his own pope.
- E. No ability to ex-communicate or discipline-makes a mockery of authority.
- F. Without authority moral darkness is rising- ECUSA example.
- G. Endless schism, zero coordination
- H. For the person:
  - 1. Frost your own cup cake world
  - 2. Lack of Certainty
  - 3. Lack of deep seated forgiveness for mortal sin
  - 4. Forced denial of the universal doctrines
  - 5. No guidelines for choosing churches
  - 6. Rejecting things that are very good gifts from God.

