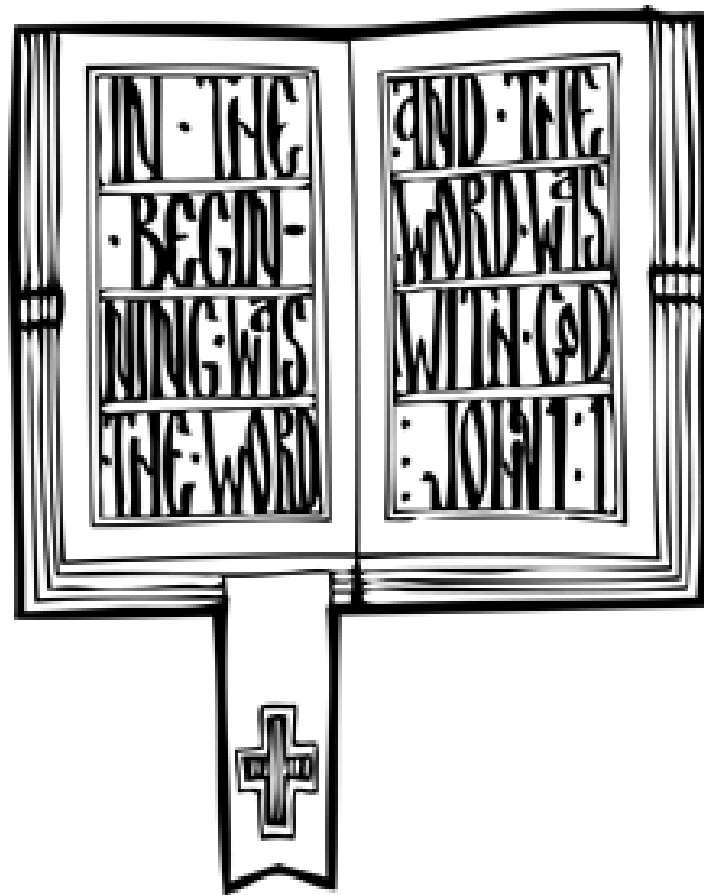


# *Sola Scriptura?*

## *Only the Bible?*

*Which came first?*  
*The Church or the Bible?*  
*What is Tradition?*



## ARE WE TO BELIEVE ONLY WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE?

Non-Orthodox Christian groups teach that the Bible is the only rule of faith and conduct for Christians. That all we have to do is accept Jesus as Saviour and read the Bible alone or in groups because there is everything we need to be saved.



For these Christians, all truth is enclosed within the covers of the Bible. This doctrine is known as Sola Scriptura (Bible Only). They all claim to believe only what is in the Bible. But... believing only in what the Scripture says... They don't believe in the same thing! Orthodox Christians believe in what the Church teaches us, for it is: "... the house of God, which is the Church of the living

God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

From this we can learn three things:

- The Church is the pillar of truth,
- The Church is the bulwark of truth,
- The Church is of the living God.

The basis of faith is not the Bible but the Church.

Why? Because the Church is NOT a group of people who invent their own doctrines based on a reading of the Bible and who cannot agree on anything. Scripture tells us, "*And he put all things under his feet, and made him head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all things in all*" (Ephesians 1:22-23)



Two things are said here about the Church:

- The Church is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- The Church is complete and filled with the Holy Spirit.

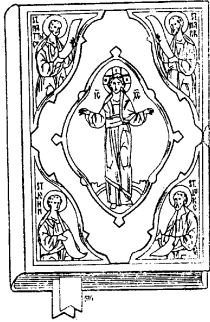
We are commanded to listen to and obey the Church, because the Church can only teach the Truth. "... *If he does not listen to the Church, consider him a Gentile and a tax collector.*" (Matthew 18:17). Orthodox Christians listen to the Church. This voice is The Tradition.

### The Bible or Tradition?

Only outside the Orthodox Church is there the view that the Bible and Tradition are in conflict: some put Tradition above the Bible and do not know what they are saying, others set aside Tradition and believe only in the Bible. And who's right? Neither group, because the Bible is part of Tradition.

The Holy Scriptures did not fall from heaven, they are the written part of that Tradition. And it was the Church that decided which books make up Scripture. Without Tradition we do NOT

know what Scripture is. Those groups that discard the Tradition of the Church put their own traditions in its place, and so we have thousands of conflicting interpretations of the Bible.



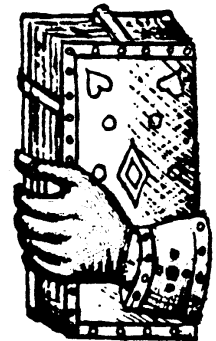
The Scriptures themselves tell us that we are to obey both written things and traditions: "*Therefore, brethren, stand firm, and hold fast to the doctrine which you have learned, whether by word or by our letter.*" (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

The disciples taught the believers the things they learned from our Lord by seeing and hearing Him. The practices of the Church were shown to these members. Paul commanded the believers: "*What you learned and received and heard and saw in me, this do it; and the God of peace will be with you*" (Philippians 4:9). And they did.

And as commanded in 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "... *Stand firm, and hold fast the doctrine which ye have learned, whether by word, or by our letter,*" and they obeyed. The Church grew that way. The Bible was never written as a constitution for the Church, nor was the Church created on the basis of the Bible. "*for this very reason I have sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful son in the lord, who will remind you of my way in Christ, as I teach everywhere and in all the Churches*" (1 cor. 4:17).

### The Importance of the Bible

The Bible is the Holy Scripture **approved by the Church**. It is accepted by the Church for meditation, prayer, to improve our faith and our knowledge. It is read and studied with great reverence. These books inspired by the Holy Spirit and written at different times prove that the practices and faith of the Church are correct and true. All of the Church's faith and practice are biblical. "*But if we, or an angel from heaven, preach to you any other gospel than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:8).



So, no matter who you are, you are not to obey anything other than what you were taught. Otherwise, we will be anathema. We must learn the practices of the early Church from the Bible. Fortunately, we also possess letters and articles written by the early Fathers of the Church. Our Lord promised us that He would send the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit would be with us always. The Holy Spirit was sent to us. And for this reason, the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and leads it to the truth.

The Church is always indefectible. To lead the Church and its flock in truth and justice, the Holy Spirit has anointed bishops and priests. God has separated them. "*Wherefore, take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers...*" (Acts 20:28). The Apostles asked Timothy to entrust faithful men capable of teaching others as well, what Timothy had learned from the Apostles (2 Timothy 2:2). As they (Paul and Timothy) travelled from city to city, they transmitted to the people for their observance the decisions made by the Apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem. So, the people "*continued in the apostles' teaching, in fellowship with*

one another, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They were also given the command: "Obey your shepherds, and submit yourselves to them; for they watch over your souls" (Hebrews 13:17). The teachings entrusted to those people have been preserved and passed down from one generation to the next. Paul says, "I praise you, brethren, because in all things you remember me, and you hold fast to the instructions just as I gave them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2).



"Hold fast to the form of the wholesome words which ye have heard of me, in the faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good deposit by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." (1 Timothy 1:13-14). It is a command from the Lord: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

This apostolic faith has been handed down from generation to generation to date.

How can we be sure that the Church has NOT made a mistake and taught error? **Because Christ promised it so!** "... and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

The Church as the Body of Christ, with Christ at its head, filled with the Holy Spirit, House of God and Pillar and Bulwark of Truth can NEITHER err nor teach error. And that same Church gave us the Sacred Scriptures so that, interpreted in the light of the Tradition of the Apostles, we may live according to God's commandments. "I still have many things to say to you, but now you can't bear them. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12-13).

If the Holy Spirit has led us into all the Truth for 2000 years, we cannot make Christ a liar by believing otherwise.

