



Their claim to understand Scripture is not based on knowledge of superior archaeological data or the opinions of one leader or another, but on their unique relationship with the Author of the Bible.

The Orthodox Church is the Body of Christ, the pillar and foundation of Truth, and is both the means by which God wrote the Bible (by its members) and the means by which God has preserved the Scriptures.

The Orthodox Church understands the Bible because it is the heir of a living tradition that begins with Adam and extends through time to all its members today.

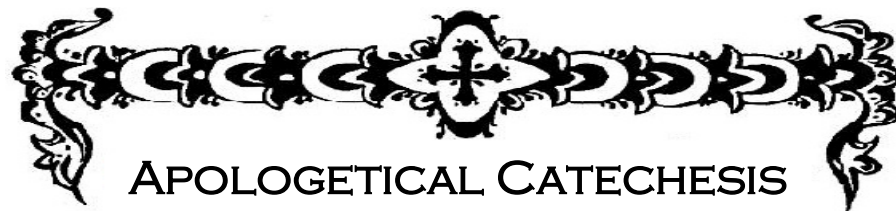
The question we will be asked is: who guarantees that the Orthodox Tradition is the correct tradition; or even, is there a correct tradition? First, they need to study the history of the Church. You will find that there is only one Church. This has always been the faith of the Church from the beginning.

The Nicene Creed clearly states, *"I believe... in the Church which is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic."*

This statement was never interpreted as a multitude of "churches", divided into pieces, which cannot agree doctrinally on anything, made up of individuals who read the Bible and interpret it freely drawing their own conclusions. Taken out of its context, within the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church, the solid rock of Scripture becomes a mere ball of clay, which can be moulded into any shape its holders wish to shape it.

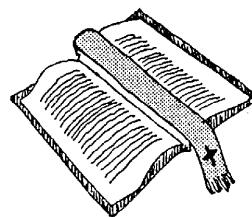
Let us ask the Church, and let us not fall into the arrogance and self-deception of believing ourselves to be infallible interpreters of the Bible.

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APOLOGETICAL CATECHESIS

Can I Interpret the Bible on my Own?



Perhaps someone has visited your home offering you a "Bible course" or will do so in the future. They will tell you that the Church does not teach the Truth, that the Truth is only in the Bible.

This doctrine is known as the "free examination or interpretation" of the Bible. It is the doctrine of thousands of groups and sects that surround us, and that divide and confuse our families.

Each of these groups believes that they understand the Bible in the right way, meanwhile, they disagree about what the Bible says, and generally agree that the person should interpret the Bible—on their own! — without the Tradition of the Church. If this principle were true, why has it resulted in more than twenty thousand dissenting groups who cannot agree on what the Bible says, or what it means to be a Christian?

This doctrine arose with the so-called Protestant Reformation, but let's look at what Martin Luther, who was the one who proposed the "free examination" of the Bible, said when he saw the results:

"There are as many sects and opinions as there are heads. He denies Baptism; the former the sacraments; the one beyond believes that there is another world between ours and the Day of Judgment. Some say that Jesus Christ is not God; others say what they want. There is no fool or scoundrel who does not consider inspiration from heaven to be what is nothing but a dream and hallucination of his" (Grisar, "Luther").



What is wrong with this doctrine? Is the Bible alone enough? Find what the Church has always believed, throughout history, and everywhere **in the Church**, and then you will have found the Truth.

ORTHODOX ANSWERS 4





This doctrine does NOT meet its own criteria!



You might imagine that a belief system like this, which has as its main doctrine that only Scripture is authoritative in matters of faith, would first seek to prove that this fundamental doctrine meets its own criteria.

At the very least, one expects to find two or three solid texts that clearly teach this doctrine—for the Scriptures themselves say, *"By the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter shall be decided"* (II Cor. 13:1).

But... It should be noted that there is not a single verse in all of Holy Scripture that teaches this doctrine that the Bible alone is sufficient and that we can interpret it for ourselves without the help of the Church.

There are countless places in the Bible that speak of its inspiration, its authority, and its usefulness—but there is not a single place in the Bible that teaches that Scripture alone is authoritative to believers.

But not only is the doctrine not taught in Scripture—it is, in fact, specifically refuted by Scripture, which teaches that Holy Tradition is also necessary for Christians (II Thess. 2:15; I Cor. 11:2).

When two members of these groups can't agree instead of renouncing the principle of "free examination," all they do is to think... that the real problem must be that those who disagree with them, in other words, every sect except their own, must be reading the Bible incorrectly.

The Principles of "Free Examination", Which do Not Work.

Use the Bible literally—its meaning is clear.

"The Bible says what it means, and it means what it says," is a phrase often heard. But when we come to scriptural texts that these groups generally disagree with, such as when Christ gave the Apostles the power to forgive sins (John 20:23), or when He said of the Eucharist *"this is my body.... this is my blood"* (Matt. 26:26-28), or when Paul taught that women should cover their heads in the Church (I Cor. 11:1-6); then, in a jiffy, the Bible no longer says what it means — "For these verses are not literal..."

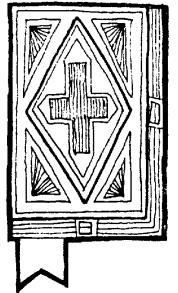


The Holy Spirit provides the right understanding.



Of course, anyone who disagrees with one of them should not possibly be led by the same Spirit. The result is that each conflicting group de-Christianizes all those who differ from them.

Now, if this approach were valid, there would only be one group in history that had interpreted the Bible correctly. But which of the thousands of denominations could it be? Of course, the answer depends on the believer you're talking to. One thing we can be sure of — he or she thinks it's his or her own group.



Let the clear passages interpret the dark ones.

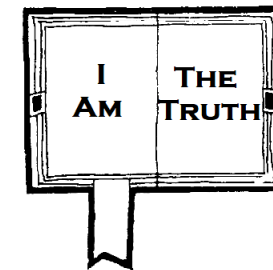
The point at which this approximation disintegrates is in determining which passages are "clear" and which are "obscure." And so, they throw Bible verses back and forth, each amazed at why the other can't "see" what is so "clear" to them.

And so, every group and every sect believe that their reading of the Holy Scriptures is the truth, not realizing that this principle does NOT work because it leads to thousands of completely different "truths".

Christ is the Truth! And Christ is the Head of His Body which is the Church, therefore, we must listen to the Church and its teachings. Heresy always tries to deceive the faithful.

The devil has always tried to deceive people into believing that they will find the truth outside of the Body of Christ.

One of the Fathers of the Church told us about heretics (those who cause division and confusion): *"By means of fallacious and plausible words, they cunningly flatter the simple to seek in their system; yet they destroy them clumsily while initiating them into their blasphemous opinions..."*



The Truth is in the One Church of Christ: The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church: The Orthodox Church.

Lest anyone be mistaken or confused: The Orthodox approach to the Bible is not based on self-investigation of the Holy Scriptures.

