

Sola Scriptura Idolatry

(Version 2.6)

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Introduction

In the Bible, we are presented with a world-view in which God speaks to His people in various ways, such as through dreams, prophecy, direct words, visions, and even physical manifestations like a burning bush. But when the Bible was completed, these more intimate/direct forms of communication from God to mankind stopped, and the only way God communicates to us today is through the Bible... at least, this is what I used to believe. This doctrine is called "*Sola Scriptura*" (which means "Scripture Only"). "*Sola Scriptura*" is accepted dogma in many protestant fundamentalist churches, including the Church of Christ, which is the denomination¹ I have worshipped in my entire life. But recently, I have come to the belief that this doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is a demonic lie which has resulted in widespread idolatry² in many churches.

Now before you stop listening (many of you may have just labeled me a heretic), I want to clarify that I do still believe the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it should be studied. What I am attacking here is not the Bible, but the doctrine of "*Sola Scriptura*³", which was put forth by Martin Luther during the 1500s.

So let's get down to what "*Sola Scriptura*" really means. If the Bible is the only way God speaks to us today, then that excludes all those more

¹ denomination: There are various sects of Christianity, often called denominations. The Church of Christ typically doesn't consider itself a denomination because it claims not to be a part of the Church, but the entire church (which is the same thing as saying all the other denominations are not real Christian churches).

² idolatry: Idolatry is substituting something else in place of God; the specific idolatrous substitution I'm referring to is the substitution of the Bible in place of the living Word of God (Christ).

³ sola scriptura: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura

direct forms of communication which we read about in the Bible, like prophecy, dreams, etc. And if we don't have Holy Spirit inspiration today as they did in the "Bible times", then we are reliant on the Bible being perfect in order to know God's will. This doctrine is often called "Biblical Inerrancy". And if the Bible is infallible, it does not make any sense to question it. Calling something "infallible" means it is beyond questioning. But should anything be beyond question?

Question everything

According to the Bible itself, we are told to "**Test everything; hold fast to what is good**", as is written in 1 Thessalonians 5:21. Furthermore, the prior verse (verse 20) says "*Do not despise prophecy*". The modern fundamentalist protestant church is going directly against these two verses by being unwilling to question the Bible, and by despising modern prophecy (by believing prophecy no longer exists). And this belief that prophecy no longer exists - that God no longer speaks to us in more intimate, direct ways, results in convincing us to not listen to the voice that God put within us when He put His Spirit in us⁴. In other words, the doctrine of "Sola Scriptura" quenches the Spirit, which is exactly what the prior verse (1 Thessalonians 5:19) warned against: "*Do not quench the Spirit.*"

If you are a fundamentalist Christian, these are extremely scary ideas. Fundamentalist Christianity has settled on the Bible as the foundation of their faith. This idea is axiomatically accepted without question. So a good question to ask would be: why is the Bible considered the foundation of the Christian faith? Is there no other foundation? After all, what other foundation could there possibly be

⁴ put His Spirit in us: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

other than the Word of God?

What is the Word of God?

For most of my life, I've used the term "Word of God" as interchangeable with the word "Bible". But is it proper to equate the "Word of God" with the Bible? What does the Bible itself say on the matter?

For starters, the word "Bible" does not appear anywhere in the Bible. This fact struck me for the first time recently when a friend on Facebook posted a picture of a Bible opened to this passage:

*"3 For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. 4 They won't listen to what the **Bible** says but will blithely follow their own misguided ideas." (2 Timothy 4:3-4, The Living Bible translation).*

At first, I thought it was a trolling attempt by someone trying to make fun of Christians - they had replaced the word "truth" with the word "Bible" and hoped Christians would post it without noticing! Only later did I realize this was an actual translation of the Bible called the "Living Bible" translation. By the way, what's with that translation name - "The Living Bible"? Is the Bible living? Where would that idea come from? My best guess would be from Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12, ESV)

Throughout my years of church, I often heard people quote this verse to demonstrate why we need to study our Bibles. But it was only

recently that the subsequent verse (Hebrews 4:13) struck me:

*"And no creature is hidden from **his** sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of **him** to whom we must give account."* (Hebrews 4:13, ESV)

*"The word of God is living and active... and no creature is hidden from **his** sight"*. That's funny... why would the Bible be referred to as "his" and "him"? The answer is that it doesn't. **The Word of God is not the Bible... the Word of God is Christ**. So, just as the word "truth" was replaced by the word "Bible" in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, the term "Word of God" has been hijacked to refer to the Bible instead of Jesus, who is the Word that proceeds from God, as is written about in John 1:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1, ESV).

So Jesus is the Word of God. But where does that leave us today? It's been over 2000 years since Jesus walked the earth. We need some way to know the Word of God. Isn't that the purpose of the Bible (John 20:31⁵)?

It is true that the Bible certainly does teach us about Jesus, so I do believe the Word of God does speak to us through the Bible. But the question is: is the Bible the **ONLY** way the Word of God speaks to us today?

Question: why would anyone believe the Bible is the only way God speaks to us, when throughout the Bible, God spoke to people in so many other ways? God spoke to people in direct ways in almost every book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. So why would anyone

⁵ John 20:31: "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

believe that after Jesus came, these more direct forms of communication with God would cease?

The main argument I have heard through the years (in the Church of Christ) to prove that things like prophecy no longer happen is taken from 1 Corinthians 13:8-12:

*"8 Love never ends. **As for prophecies, they will pass away;** as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 **but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.** 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 **For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.** Now I know in part; **then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.**" (1 Corinthians 13:8-12, ESV).*

The argument that I heard was that "the perfect" described in verse 10 is the Bible, and since the Bible has been completed, "the partial" (prophecy, tongues, etc), has "passed away". However, I believe this is yet another example of a perversion of scripture which substitutes the Bible for something else. In this case, it seems pretty clear to me that the "perfect" here is talking about heaven - not the Bible. Look at how verse 12 describes what it will be like when this "perfect" comes: *"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."* Does this sound like it's describing the Bible? **Now that we have the Bible, do we "know fully"**? Paul here claims that "we" (which would include Paul) only saw "in a mirror dimly" by comparison to how we will see when the "perfect comes"; do we know everything fully now that we have the Bible? Do we see so clearly now that, by comparison, Paul only saw "dimly in a mirror⁶"? And what about

⁶ dimly in a mirror: And if Paul only saw dimly in a mirror compared to our full sight (now that we have the Bible), certainly we should be comfortable questioning anything Paul wrote, right?

being "fully known"? How would having the completed Bible make us be "fully known"? And what about the part about seeing "face to face"? Do you feel you are seeing "face to face" when you read the Bible?

This single perversion of the scripture in 1 Corinthians 13 has effectively **nullified** huge swaths of the Bible (all the other Bible verses which talk about prophecy). For example, the very next chapter (after 1 Corinthians 13) opens with: "***Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.***" (1 Corinthians 14:1). But having attended "Sola Scriptura" churches all my life, I never thought this admonition was applicable to me. If you claim to respect for the Bible, I hope you see the danger of nullifying large swaths of the scripture.

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So, what if what I'm saying is true, and the Bible is NOT the only way God speaks to people today... how's that supposed to look today? We don't have Jesus walking around on the earth today, *right?* And what would prophecy even look like? Should I be hearing voices? Should I look like the Pentecostal groups with everyone speaking in tongues and making "prophetic predictions" about the future?

Personally, with my Church of Christ background, I've always been turned off by the idea of "spiritual gifts", because they always seemed fake to me. And I have spoken with ex-Pentecostals who said that they were faking things like speaking in tongues, at least some of the time. But just because some are faking it doesn't mean it's all fake. "But shouldn't I have at least seen some 'spiritual gifts' by this point?" you might ask. Maybe not; you won't find if you don't *seek*. You won't receive if you don't *ask*.

At this point, maybe you have an image in your head of praying for the gift of tongues or the gift of prophecy, and trying to will yourself into believing... and if you're like me, that's kind of cringy. But I have good news: the Holy Spirit is for everyone:

*"17 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh**, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18, ESV)*

God says here that "*in the last days... I will pour out my Spirit on **all flesh***". We are still in the "last days" (since, you know, the world hasn't ended yet). And if God says He will pour out His Spirit on all people, that should certainly include all Christians. But again, how should this look?

Over my years at churches, I was always taught to believe the Holy Spirit was within us, but practically speaking, the Holy Spirit always seemed intangible to me. I would mentally agree that the Holy Spirit was in me (since the Bible said it), but I didn't know what that meant. I didn't *feel* the Spirit in me. In fact, for most of my Christian life, I've been doubtful about my salvation - I didn't feel the "guarantee" of the "seal of the Spirit" (as is described in Ephesians 1:13-14). To me, **God always felt far away**. For years, one of the most concerning questions in my mind... the question that most made me consider atheism was: **Why doesn't God just show Himself???**

## **Why doesn't God show Himself?**

In the last 2 years of my life (as of the time of this writing - April 2020), my world has been wildly transformed, and I have been

transforming with it. About 6 years ago, something called to my *heart* and said “***THERE IS MORE!***” Since then, I have been searching for that *something more*. And about 2 years ago, I saw something... let's call it a manifestation. For brevity, I don't want to get into the details, except to share a message that I came away from it with: ***this world we are living in is not separate from God.***

It was not until after this experience that I realized that previously, I had believed in something similar to a deistic<sup>7</sup> worldview. I had believed that God created the world, but it seemed that God took a very hands-off approach. It seemed to me that chaos generally ruled, and that maybe, every once-in-a-while, God would give a little nudge here or there. God felt far, far away, and I had believed He had pretty much stopped talking long, long ago - when the Bible was "completed" ("Sola Scriptura"). Then I had this experience, and I started having all these ideas that I felt were original to me. But when I looked back at the Bible, I found that this "new" view I had experientially come upon was actually the worldview taught in the Bible (as well as in various other Spiritual traditions). One such Bible verse is Acts 17:27-28:

*"They should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.” (Acts 17:27-28, ESV)*

God is not far away. "*In Him we live and move and have our being*". I had read this verse many times before, but I didn't take it literally, as I do now. I thought it was just a nice sounding saying, but not the literal truth. I used to think that if God was the Artist, He couldn't also be the Art... the Artist and the Art must be separate, right?

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<sup>7</sup> deism: the belief that God created the world and then stepped away and takes a completely hands-off approach.

This view that God and the creation are separate is sometimes called *dualism*. And the term for the worldview I now found myself believing is called *panentheism*, which literally means "all in God". This is the Biblical worldview, but somehow I had missed it. And upon reexamination of the Bible, again and again what I found had happened was that I didn't take things literally, but just took many of the phrases as nice sounding but essentially meaningless statements. A few examples include things like God being "**All in All**" (1 Corinthians 15:28) or "*There is one body and one Spirit... **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.***" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

But back to the question above: if God is the Artist, how could He also be the Art? If God is the Speaker, how could He also be the spoken Word? If God is the Creator, how could He also be the creation?

## **Where does the Artist end and the Art begin?**

In most forms of Art, the Artist and the Art are separate. But one form of Art in which the Artist and the Art are not separate is dreams. In dreams, the work of Art (the dream) resides *inside* of the Artist, and is made of the Artist/Dreamer (rather than being made out of some other medium like clay). Maybe God's art is more like a dream than a painting. But does this idea fit with what the Bible says of God and the creation?

First, keep in mind that this idea, that God is dreaming us into existence, is only a metaphor. In our human experience of dreams, the dreamer is unconscious in the larger, more real world. This is where the metaphor breaks down; I'm not saying God is asleep in some larger world dreaming us into existence. What larger world could God be in? My view of God is that He is the largest "entity" that exists. That is: God is not floating in some larger world. If God is the most outward shell of

reality, there is no larger world He could exist in. And taking this line of reasoning a step further, if God is going to create something, where else could He create it other than inside Himself? To use the poetry of David in Psalm 139:

*"Where shall I go from your Spirit?*

*Or where shall I flee from your presence?*

*If I ascend to heaven, you are there!*

*If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*

*If I take the wings of the morning*

*and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*even there your hand shall lead me,*

*and your right hand shall hold me."* (Psalm 139:7-12, ESV)

God is omnipresent. He's even in Sheol. And we just mentioned that Acts 17:28 says "*in [God] we live and move and have our being*". That certainly sounds like we are in God. But even if we are in God, are we made out of God? And is there any Biblical evidence that the creation itself is a part of God? A good verse to consider for these questions is Colossians 1:15-17:

**"15 [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."** (Colossians 1:15-17, ESV).

This is another verse which I heard many times throughout the years, but I never paid close attention to, because I just overlooked it as a

religious nice-sounding-but-not-literal saying. Anyway, one of the most striking parts of this verse is where it says Jesus is "*the firstborn of all creation.*" For brevity, let's not get into whether or not Jesus actually had a beginning. Personally, I think God the Father has been eternally creating, which would mean Jesus is eternally being created. But either way, this verse identifies Jesus with the creation. And since we believe Jesus is God, **this shows that God is both the Creator and the created.** Or to word it another way: Jesus is the "Painting<sup>8</sup>", and the Father is the Painter. This is very similar to the description of Christ as the Word (or Logos) in John 1:

*"1 In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 **All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**" (John 1:1-3)*

An interesting side-note here: the greek word "Logos" (translated here as "*the Word*") is translated in Chinese as the Tao<sup>9</sup>. "*In the beginning was the Tao, and the Tao was with God, and the Tao was God.*" Anyway, in both Colossians 1 and John 1, we see a lot of similar language about how "all things were made through Christ". And we even have descriptions which sound like they are describing the physical fabric of the world - things like "*in him all things hold together*" (Colossians 1:17). A similarly physics-sounding verse is Hebrews 11:3, which says "***the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are***

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<sup>8</sup> Painting: The Father is the Artist, The Son is the Art, and the Holy Spirit is the Artistic Lust which is being expressed.

<sup>9</sup> Tao: Tao is also often translated "The Way". Christ is the expression of God that we are all living in, and even without the Bible, people have come to know God, as it says in Romans 1:19-20: "19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

**visible**". The Word of God is the creation that proceeds from God. The Word of God is that which was spoken by God in Genesis 1... "*And then God said... And then God said... and then God said...*".

The doctrine of Sola Scriptura teaches that the Bible is the only way we can know the Word of God today. This lie causes us to close our eyes to all the ways the Word of God - the Logos - the Tao - the Christ - the Image of God is being expressed in literally **EVERYTHING THAT IS**. Remember God's name: **I AM**.

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So, we are living in God. But there's more: we are also made of God. God is Everything in Everything (or "*All in All*", as 1 Corinthians 15:28 says). So if we are in God, and God is in us... where does God end and we begin? Is there any separation? Let's ask this question another way: where does the tree end and the branches begin? Jesus said:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5, ESV).

A tree (or a vine) is not separate from its branches - they are one being. And so, we are one with Jesus. Remember that we are called the "*body of Christ*". And Jesus says "*as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me*" (Matthew 25:40). And if we are one with Jesus, we are one with God:

*"20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that **they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us**, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* (John 17:20-21, ESV)

“I have said you are gods.”

This idea, that we are one with God, is a blasphemous-sounding idea. And when the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth walked the earth, he got in trouble with the religious elites for claiming that "*I and the Father are one*" (John 10:30). When Jesus made this statement, the Jews answered him...

*"It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for **blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.**"* (John 10:33)

They accused Jesus of blasphemy because Jesus, "being a man", said he was one with God. Jesus replied to this accusation by saying:

*"Is it not written in your Law, I said, **you are gods**'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"* (John 10:34-6)

What is Jesus saying here? How does He defend his stance? The way I used to believe, I would have expected Jesus to say something like "well, if I was *just* a man, your accusation of blasphemy would be valid, but I am a one-of-a-kind blend: both fully God AND fully man." **But Jesus doesn't make that argument.** Instead, Jesus says "he called them **gods** to whom the word of God came-- and Scripture cannot be broken". So you have God speaking to people who are referred to as "gods". In this same Psalm (which Jesus is referencing), it also says:

*"God has taken his place in the divine council; **in the midst of the gods**¹⁰ he holds judgment." (Psalms 82:1, ESV)*

Here's the main point of Jesus's argument: **these words "I have said you are gods" are addressed to people. Jesus's argument is that people are "gods"**. Another quote from the Psalm that Jesus is quoting here:

*"**You are gods**, sons of the Most High, all of you." (Psalm 82:6, ESV).*

I believe Jesus is teaching that not only is he one with God, but all of people are gods (one with God). As this verse says: we are "*sons of the Most High*". **The child of a dog is a dog, and the child of God is a god**. BUT... I don't mean we are gods which are separate from The God; I mean that "**God is One**" (Galatians 3:20), and we are part of the One God. In fact, we share the One Spirit:

*"There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**" (Ephesians 4:4-6).*

So we are not little gods which are separate from God, but we are all part of the One God. We are like cells in the body of God... Or "members", as 1 Corinthians 12 words it:

*"12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in **one Spirit** we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were*

¹⁰ gods: In Psalm 82:1, the Hebrew word used for "in the midst of the gods" is elohim, the same exact word used for "God" in the same verse.

made to drink of one Spirit... 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27)

God is One. Jesus was accused of blasphemy for saying he and the Father are One. And I am saying that just as Jesus and the Father are One, we too are One with God. Consider the words of Jesus in John 17:

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us**, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, **that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one**, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." (John 17:20-23)*

The Word of God (Christ) was resurrected, and walks the earth today. The Word of God speaks today -- not just in the Bible, but in people:

*"And in the last days¹¹ it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
even on my male servants and female servants*

¹¹ last days: By the way, we're still in the "last days", since the days haven't ended

in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18)

But if the Spirit still speaks today, how do we hear?

The Most Holy Place

In the Old Covenant days, there was a physical building called the temple. And in the temple, there was an inner sanctuary called the Most Holy Place, which was where the high priest would go to commune with God. But the temple back then was a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). Jesus came and revealed the higher truth: the **true temple of God is the body of mankind**. God was incarnated in flesh while Jesus walked the earth, and God is still incarnated in flesh today in us:

*"16 Do you not know that **you are God's temple** and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For **God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.**" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).*

So your body is a temple. Question then: where is the Most Holy Place in the temple of your body? We get the answer to that question in 2 Corinthians 3. When reading this, keep in mind that the Most Holy Place was separated by a veil (the veil that was torn when Jesus died on the cross)...

*"14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read **a veil lies over their hearts**. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."* (2 Corinthians

3:14-17)

Your body is a temple of God, and your heart is the Most Holy Place which lies behind the veil - a veil that is only taken away through Christ. Let me say that again: **Your heart is the Most Holy Place.**

This is a striking statement if you come from a conservative protestant background like myself, because I was always told I couldn't trust my heart. The same verse was always used: "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Maybe our hearts can be sick, but don't we have a good physician - someone who can heal our heart¹²? Maybe I couldn't trust my heart when I was separated from God, but what about when I am reunited through Jesus - when the veil is lifted? Shouldn't I be able to trust my heart if my heart is the Most Holy Place where the Spirit of God dwells?

The doctrine of Sola Scriptura argues that we can only trust the words which were written in ink by people who had the Spirit long ago, and yet, in the same chapter (2 Corinthians 3), Paul says that the Spirit writes on "the tablets of human hearts":

*"2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that **you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)*

¹² heal our heart: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

God is speaking today - not only through the Bible, but also through our hearts:

"10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,

and **write them on their hearts,**

and I will be their God,

and they shall be my people.

11 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor

and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'

for **they shall all know me,**

from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,

and I will remember their sins no more." (Hebrews 8:10-12)

If God's law is written on our minds and hearts, why would we think the Bible is the only way we can know the mind of God today? We have the mind of Christ!

"For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. *We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from*

God...We have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:11-12,16).

We were lied to. We were told we couldn't trust the message coming from the Most Holy Place within our hearts. We were told that the Spirit stopped speaking at the "completion of the Biblical canon" (or something like that). But think about it: doesn't it seem incredible strange that God spoke in more direct ways throughout the Bible times, but that, after Jesus came and the Spirit was given, that the Spirit would suddenly go mute¹³? Doesn't it seem strange that people like David could write poetry which we consider inspired by the Holy Spirit, but that, after Jesus, we today can't write poetry inspired but the Holy Spirit?

I have come to believe that the doctrine of Sola Scriptura is a demonic perversion of scripture. If you believe Sola Scriptura, you believe that all you can know about God has been revealed to you in the writings of the Bible. And this belief causes its adherents to miss all the ways God is communicating to us through his preferred medium of Art: the life we are all living.

Written words are not the only way to communicate. Artists communicate through many forms such as painting, dance, movies, etc. God is communicating to you today through the story of your life. It's like a movie, but you're living it. And I know that it may seem random ("random" is the word we use when we don't understand), but **your God reigns**. God is in control of every hair on your head, of every wave in the ocean, and of every detail in this life. God rules - not chaos.

If you believe that God took a very hands-off approach - that He is only kind in control but, you know, bad stuff just happens sometimes...

¹³ mute: "16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17)

you probably aren't paying attention to the details like you would if you believed God was shaping even the smaller details. If you believe "bad things just happen", you may be failing to ask questions like "what is this painful situation I'm in supposed to teach me"?

So how can we hear God speaking today? Be quiet, and pay attention. Don't quench the Spirit by despising prophecy. Question everything¹⁴. We have the mind of Christ - use it. Pay attention to the Art all around you, and also inside of you. The Bible is not the Image of God, and nor is a carved block of wood. God made his own self-portrait: Christ/us¹⁵ (we are One with Christ). And last, pay attention to the messages coming from the Most Holy Place - your heart. Pay attention to the story you are living in - the story that is authored not by chaos, but by God.

May the eyes of your heart be enlightened.

Conclusion: Freedom!

Martin Luther, seeing the evil of the sin indulgences perpetrated by the Catholic Church knew something had to change... he could feel it in his heart. But the Catholic Church was The Authority on Christianity at the time. So what was he to do? His solution was to replace the Catholic Church with the Bible as the unquestionable authority on God's

¹⁴ question everything: "Test everything" (1 Thessalonians 5:19) implies that we have the ability to test things. We are each ultimately responsible for deciding what we believe. You can't just say you believe the Bible because it claims to be from God - it is you ultimately deciding. And this deciding is the job of the heart - "it is with the heart that you believe and are justified." (Romans 10:10). You seek with your heart: "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13).

¹⁵ us: Sometimes people teach about God by way of counterexample - listen to your heart, and you can usually figure out when things are right and when things are wrong.

will for mankind, and thus launched the Protestant Reformation.

And while I am grateful for Martin Luther challenging the infallibility of the Catholic Church, I believe he made a mistake in setting up the Bible as a new unquestionable authority. Because, while I do believe the Holy Spirit did speak through the Bible, I also believe that the Holy Spirit continues to speak in us. That is the reason we are capable of following the command to "test everything and hold to what is good."

If the law is written in our hearts - if the Spirit is dwelling in our hearts - if our hearts are indeed the Most Holy Place, then we can listen to our hearts to know God's will. If we have a direct connection with God - if we are priests¹⁶ to God directly, we can receive God's will through our hearts. I'm not saying we shouldn't still seriously consider the Biblical writings - I believe they were inspired by the Spirit, and you should always consider the words of those who are Spirit-filled. And the more you look for it, the more you will find it. In the strangest of places, with the strangest of people you will find it. Things are not what they seem¹⁷.

¹⁶ priests: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

¹⁷ Things are not what they seem:

* "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.'" (Matthew 11:18-19).

* "Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"" (John 10:20-21)

* "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.'" (Matthew 12:24)

* "14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

Be quiet, and pay attention.

I used to be a slave. I felt enslaved to unquestioningly follow what I was told about how to follow God. I didn't think I needed to feel like following God - I was just supposed to do it. The way to further spiritual growth, I felt forced to believe, was to even further repress my heart - to do less of the things I felt like, and more of the things I didn't feel like. There were people who seemed well-exercised in living passionlessly - not from the heart, and I felt like they were the people I was supposed to emulate. But I wanted to be able to follow God and live from my heart. Something told me that the ideal relationship with God is one of the heart - like the example of David... who was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

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An external authority was needed before Christ came, and that was the law. **But it is a mistake to persist in this pre-Christ mentality of slavery.** Now that Christ has come, we no longer need a "guardian" - an external authority (other than God directly) to tell us God's will:

*"24 So then, the law was our guardian **until** Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, **we are no longer under a guardian**, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through*

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\* "15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:15-20)

\* 1 Sam 16:7 - "But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

*faith." (Galatians 3:24-26)*

But now that Christ has come, we have something new - freedom:

*"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1)*

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In conclusion, I no longer believe that the Bible is an unquestionable authority which has been set over me. I still have a strong respect for the words written in the Bible, but I no longer feel the need to see the Bible as an unquestionable authority, because the same Spirit who authored the Bible dwells in my heart.

I now believe that it is ultimately my responsibility to determine what I do and don't believe. How could it be otherwise? Let's say you claim "I believe what I believe because the Bible says it"; and someone asks you "But why do you believe the Bible?" When I have asked people this question, the answer is usually something like "I looked at the evidence and concluded that the Bible is from God." But look: it's still you deciding whether or not you believe the Bible, based on your own consideration of the evidence. In other words, it's still you who are deciding what you believe.

It is ultimately on us to decide what we believe (and more importantly, how we act). But don't worry; you're not alone. We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). We weren't left orphans (John 14:18). God is here among us (Matthew 18:20). We are the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). Christ is our brother (Hebrews 2:11). We are children of God (Galatians 3:26).

Pay attention to God's Art all around you - the child of a dog is a dog, the child of God is a god, as it says in Psalm 82:6: "I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;"

Let us grow up in Christ (Ephesians 4:15). We are free - we are no longer under law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). And the more we follow God, the more freedom¹⁸ He will give us (Matthew 23:23). "Love, and do what you want." (Augustine)

With Love,
Caleb

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P.S. Where is the kingdom of heaven? How far away is "at hand"?

*"20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is **in the midst of you [or: within you].**" (Luke 17:20-21, ESV).*

P.P.S Note that this document has a version... if you believe there are mistakes I should correct in this, shoot me an email at [caleb.madrigal@gmail.com](mailto:caleb.madrigal@gmail.com).

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<sup>18</sup> freedom: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17).

