

Lecture 4 – Sola Scriptura – The Church Fathers Say **sermonaudio.com** Yes

By William Webster

Preached on: Sunday, September 1993

Grace Bible Church

2210 W. Main Street
Suite 107 Box 244
Battle Ground, WA 98604

Website: gracebiblebattleground.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gracebiblebg

We have considered thus far under the category of authority relative to Roman Catholic tradition two basic topics. First of all, we have looked at Sola Scriptura relative to Scripture, and we've demonstrated, I think quite sufficiently, that the Scriptures themselves do teach Sola Scriptura. Secondly, we have looked at the topic of the Canon of Scripture demonstrating that the Roman Catholic Church did not establish the Canon for the church relative to the Old and New Testaments. Today we want to examine the topic of the relationship between Scripture and tradition in the early church. We want, in other words, to examine the issue of Sola Scriptura from an historical standpoint. So we're looking at this from two standpoints: one is scriptural, the other is historical. Now we've done that biblically, we want to do this from the perspective of history.

We've seen that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that there are two sources of divine revelation. First, you have the Scriptures and we've said that the Roman Catholic Church is very orthodox relative to their teaching on the Scriptures, the Scriptures are inherently authoritative because they are the inspired word of God, but the Roman Catholic Church teaches also that there's a second vehicle of revelation, that being oral tradition which it claims can be traced back to the apostles through the succession of the bishops of the church and ultimately, therefore, to Jesus Christ. Now it does not simply claim the illumination of the Holy Spirit for its historic teaching, we need to understand that it claims inspiration for this oral tradition on a level equal to the inspiration that is given to the Old and New Testaments.

Now in this session we want to explore whether it can be shown historically that the general claims that the Roman Catholic Church makes for its tradition are valid. We've already seen that it is not valid biblically, scripturally, but the question that we now want to ask is this: is it valid historically? That is, did the early church teach what the Roman Catholic Church today teaches about tradition, or did the early church hold to the view of Sola Scriptura? And Roman apologists never tire of saying over and over again that the Protestant teaching of Sola Scriptura is unhistorical because they say it contradicts the teaching of the early church, but what we will find as we examine the teaching of the fathers is that it is, in fact, the Roman Catholic teaching on tradition which is unhistorical because it employs the term "tradition" in a way that was never employed by the early church. Roman apologists consistently, I believe, distort the facts of history and mislead

ignorant people by indiscriminately imposing a Roman Catholic meaning of tradition on the writings of the fathers.

The assumption is since the Roman Catholic Church uses the term "tradition" and it has a certain doctrinal content, and the early church fathers also used the term "tradition," that therefore the two must be equivalent terms, that they must mean the same thing. Well, nothing could be further from the truth, as we will see. That is a fundamental error of historiography, of imposing concepts that develop later in time upon an earlier age. It results in revisionism and I really believe with all my heart that the Roman Catholic Church is very guilty of revisionism. It's very easy to deceive and to mislead people who are very sincere but who are ignorant from the standpoint of the fact that they have never in their life so much as turned one page of a writing of the church fathers, and I speak here to both Protestant as well as Roman Catholics.

The thing that greatly concerns me as I listen to Roman apologists and read Roman Catholic literature is the fact that I feel that many many people are being deceived, they are being misled. Multitudes of sincere but ignorant people are being misinformed and misled by men who distort and manipulate historical facts. Most of the time this is unintentional but sometimes it's purposeful and I don't say that without being able to back that up. I mean, I have heard statements from a man like Scott Hahn, for example, that he knows are not true. If anyone should know what he's saying relative to some of the statements he said, it is Scott Hahn. I'm going to play you one of those statements when we get to the issue of the papacy, but it is just an outright fabrication and it is purposeful. He knows what he said is wrong because it's a very simple fact to disprove from history.

Most of the time it's not intentional. Sometimes it is. What results is that you have people who uncritically accept what these men teach and in accepting it, what they do is they embrace error. And my real concern is for people to understand when they talk about Protestantism, that they understand what that means historically and that they understand that the truth that the Protestant church is standing for is not a novel teaching, it goes back to the faith of the early church. When one takes the time to actually read the major works of the church fathers, and I have done that, I have not relied on secondhand information and what other people have said about them, but when one reads their works and wanting to understand the overall flow and the context to their writings, what one finds is that in their writings they do not support the Roman Catholic claims for its tradition.

One of the vital elements in the claims that the Roman Catholic Church for its tradition is that its basic teachings have been handed down orally from the apostles without distortion and without corruption, yet when we investigate historically the meaning or the concept of tradition itself, just the concept of tradition itself, we find that there's been a tremendous change through the centuries for the early church did not subscribe to the Roman Catholic view of tradition in its concept. The early fathers did indeed use the term "tradition" but not in the same way that the Roman Catholic Church employs the term.

As we saw two weeks ago, the word "tradition," the Greek word is "paradosis." It simply means "teaching that has been handed down." Now it can be handed down either orally, it can be handed down in writing, but it's just teaching. For the early church, the apostolic tradition was equated with Scripture. To those early fathers, the Scriptures were the only source of revelation and the ultimate standard of authority or rule of faith. Tradition when referring to oral proclamations such as preaching or teaching was viewed primarily as the oral presentation of scriptural truth or it was the codifying, if you will, of biblical truth and the credal expression and that's where the Creeds come from. But at every point, the foundation for that tradition was Scripture. It was not viewed as a separate revelation via oral tradition.

Oral tradition, if you will, was grounded in Scripture. It was simply the oral teaching of Scripture just as I'm doing right now, teaching orally. What is the foundation for what I teach? It's Scripture. It's given orally and you could call it oral tradition because it means oral teaching, but it's not a separate source of revelation independent of Scripture, you see. It's grounded in the Scriptures, in the word of God.

Heiko Oberman in his research on the relationship of tradition and Scripture in the early church makes these comments. He says, "Scripture and tradition were for the Early Church in no sense mutually exclusive: kerygma (the message of the gospel), Scripture and Tradition coincided entirely. The Church preached the kerygma, which is found in toto in written form in the canonical books. The tradition was not understood as an addition to the kerygma contained in Scripture but as handing down that same kerygma in living form: in other words everything was to be found in Scripture and at the same time everything was in living Tradition." Now from the very first writings of the post-apostolic age as we saw in the apostolic writings and when we looked at the Canon, in those apostolic fathers to those fathers of the ensuing centuries, we find them quoting extensively from both the Old and the New Testaments and appealing to them as the authoritative standard of divine revelation for everything that they taught.

J. N. D. Kelly, who is an historian who's done a great deal of work relative to the teaching of the early church and specifically related to tradition and what it meant in the early church, makes this comment. He says, "The clearest token of the prestige enjoyed by Scripture is the fact that almost the entire theological effort of the Fathers, whether their aims were polemical or constructive, was expended upon what amounted to the exposition of the Bible. Further, it was everywhere taken for granted that, for any doctrine to win acceptance, it had first to establish its Scriptural basis." Now that's after researching throughout the entire patristic age, he comes to this conclusion from the writings of the fathers.

Now while it is clear that these fathers all appealed to Scripture as the source of authority, the question obviously is brought up: did they not also appeal to tradition as a source of authority? And the answer is: yes, they did. Now while all the fathers refer constantly to Scripture, some of them, in particular Irenaeus, who was a second century father, one of the major church fathers in the early church, and Tertullian, who wrote between the second and into the third centuries, both of these apologists appealed to an apostolic

tradition handed down to the churches, but we need to understand clearly what these fathers meant when they used the term in the early history of the church, the word came to embody three major categories of meaning. When the fathers referred to tradition, they mean one of three things. First of all, it meant the rule of faith or the apostolic doctrine handed down from the apostles, that is, the essential dogmas of the faith. Secondly, it had to do with ecclesiastical customs or practices which had had a long history of use in the church, traditions handed down, meaning practices that were handed down that had been used for a long time in the church. Thirdly, it had to do with a consensus of patristic interpretation of the Scriptures. Now we're going to look at the first one in detail today and we'll look at the last two next week.

In the references which Irenaeus and Tertullian make to the apostolic tradition or the rule of faith, or another term that they use is the canon of truth, that's Irenaeus' favorite term for the apostolic tradition, these common titles that they employ to refer to this tradition, they do not leave us in doubt as to the exact nature of what they mean by tradition and its relationship to Scripture. Now in his tape series, Scott Hahn, who has a tape series on the whole issue of Sola Scriptura, in that tape series Scott Hahn completely misrepresents the teaching of Irenaeus. When he states that because Irenaeus refers to the preaching of the church in which the apostolic tradition is preserved in purity, when he talks about preaching here, what Hahn says is that he is referring to an oral tradition that is independent from Scripture. Now that's a total distortion of what Irenaeus is truly saying. He does emphasize the oral proclamation of the faith by the church, but he does not mean by this a body of truth which is handed down and preserved orally independent of Scripture.

Now the great work of Irenaeus, which I highly recommend you read, is called "Against Heresies." In that work, he makes these statements which give us his true teaching. He says, "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public," orally, "and, at a later time, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. True knowledge is [that which consists in] the doctrine of the apostles and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine, and neither receiving addition nor [suffering] curtailment [in the truths which she believes]; and [it consists in] reading [the word of God] without falsification, and a lawful and diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures, both without danger and without blasphemy." Now you note, please note that what Irenaeus is saying, he states that what had been originally proclaimed and taught orally by the apostles was at a later time, he says by the will of God, handed down to them not orally but in the Scriptures, and that the oral teaching of the bishops conforms to and is in harmony with the word of God, the written word of God, the Scriptures. And Irenaeus makes it clear and so does Tertullian that there was no truth left to oral transmission.

The entirety of the message of the faith was committed to writing by the apostles and in order to understand why Irenaeus is writing this particular treatise, "Against Heresies," and why he is speaking on the subject of oral tradition and Scripture in the way that he does, we need to understand the circumstances that he was faced with. His use of the word "tradition" has a very specific content and a very specific context, and unless we understand the content and the context, we will misinterpret what he means by the word "tradition." You see, it's not enough simply to quote a word from this church father and say, "See, he believes in oral tradition because he uses the word 'tradition.'" What does he mean by the word "tradition"? I can't take what I link to the word "tradition" today and impose it *carte blanche* on what he is saying here unless I can back that up. Does he mean what the Roman Catholic Church means today? The answer is: no, he doesn't.

Irenaeus wrote his work "Against Heresies" to counter the heretical teachings of the Gnostics. Now the Gnostics did not dispute the authority of the Scriptures, they accepted the authority of the Scriptures except for Marcion who, as we saw last week, mutilated the Scriptures because he took some of them out of the Canon, but he still held to the authority of what he considered to be Scripture. They did not impugn the authority of Scripture, what they did was that they completely misinterpreted the text. They used the Scriptures but they misinterpreted the text, but they also did something else, they supplemented the authority of Scripture with another authority. This is where things get very interesting relative to our study of the teaching of Roman Catholic tradition, for the Gnostics claimed to have access to an oral tradition independent of Scripture handed down by the apostles to which they alone were the recipients. In this way they sought to blunt the ultimate and the final authority of Scripture by saying that not everything that the apostles had taught was in Scripture but they possessed additional revelation which had been handed down to them orally from the apostles.

Irenaeus states in his work the Gnostic position in these words, he says this, "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. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *vivâ voce*," *viva voce* is simply the term "orally." But if the apostles had known hidden mysteries which they were in the habit of imparting to the perfect apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the churches themselves.

Now you note the logic that the Gnostics used against the church. What they say is this: the Scriptures are not fully sufficient for understanding revelation. Unless a person understands the oral tradition handed down from the apostles, in particular, to them the Gnostics, they cannot understand the Scriptures. It is the Gnostics alone who can give the correct and spiritual interpretation of the Scripture for it is interpreted in conformity with the oral apostolic tradition which they possess.

Now Irenaeus answers those claims in two ways. First of all, he establishes the fact that the apostles' successors can be found in all the orthodox churches, they can trace their

succession directly back to the apostles. These bishops all proclaimed in their preaching and teaching throughout the whole world the same truth without any variation. And both Irenaeus and Tertullian point out to us the exact doctrinal content of the apostolic tradition that they proclaimed orally, and we'll look at that in just a minute. You see, they're telling us the content. It's not just that they proclaim orally a certain tradition and they leave it at that, they tell us what it consisted of in particular and very explicitly. The Gnostics, says Irenaeus, can claim no succession and their teaching, as to what the apostolic tradition consists of, contradicts that which has been universally held by the churches and proclaimed by the bishops throughout the world.

Now in addition, he says that what the apostles had at one time proclaimed orally since the Gnostics want to claim an oral tradition, what he says is that, yes, at one time the apostles proclaimed truth orally and it was given orally, but he says they committed what they had given orally to writing and handed it down in Scripture which subsequently became the authoritative standard of truth by which all alleged teachings of truth must conform.

They are, he says, the ground and pillar of our faith. What's the foundation for our faith? Scripture. That's his statement, and so he goes on to say that the truth proclaimed orally by the bishops in the churches as they preach and teach the apostolic tradition conforms to the Scriptures which verifies the doctrinal content of the apostolic tradition. Again, when Irenaeus and Tertullian talk about this apostolic tradition, in explicit terms they tell us the doctrinal content of the rule of faith or the apostolic tradition, and when they do that, what they reveal is that that apostolic tradition which is proclaimed orally is simply the summation of the major teachings of Scripture. Thus an oral tradition independent of Scripture and its content, which does not conform to the teaching of Scripture, is in the view of Irenaeus and Tertullian a Gnostic heresy. Succession proves that the bishops preach and teach the true apostolic tradition while Scripture verifies what the content of that apostolic tradition is.

So he has two lines of thought: one is succession and the authority of bishops who had their succession from the apostles and therefore they had received a teaching from the apostles, the other is the authority of Scripture which identifies for us what the content of that apostolic tradition is, that they are faithful to preach.

Ellen Flesseman-Van Leer in an exhaustive study of the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian on the nature of tradition in the early church makes this comment, she says, "For Irenaeus the church doctrine is certainly never purely traditional. On the contrary, the thought that there could be some truth transmitted exclusively *viva voce*," that is, orally, "is an Gnostic line of thought. For Irenaeus, then, tradition is simply another term for the oral proclamation of the truth of Scripture in preaching, teaching, or in credal statements. It is not an independent source of revelation but a verbal presentation of the one authoritative revelation of God, the holy Scriptures. It is, if you will, the church's interpretation of the major teaching of Scripture."

So tradition is equal to the apostolic doctrine which is equal to the Scriptures. In other words, the foundation for tradition is the word of God, the written word of God, the Scriptures therefore the Roman Catholic Church's appeal to Irenaeus for support for the doctrine of tradition as a separate source of revelation is erroneous, and I want to further support that from the statements that some major historians.

Jaroslav Pelikan has written a five volume work on church history entitled "The Christian Tradition: A history of the development of doctrine." He confirms the fact that the oral teaching of the apostles was later committed to writing which became the standard for determining apostolic tradition. He says this, "What the apostles had preached viva voce," and then he quotes Irenaeus, then he said, "handed down to us in the Scriptures as the pillar and bulwark of our faith. Not to assent to the content of these scriptures was to hold in contempt those who had communion with Christ the Lord...So it was that the terms apostolic, catholic, traditional, and orthodox became synonymous terms. The apostolic dogmas was a standard term for that which was believed, taught and confessed by the orthodox catholic church on the basis of the word of God. "

Philip Schaff who I think most people are familiar with who's written an eight volume work on the history of the church up to the time of the Reformation, he says this, "the apparent contradictions of the earlier fathers, in ascribing its highest authority to both Scripture and tradition in matters of faith, resolve themselves. It is one and the same Gospel which the apostles preached with their lips, and then laid down in their writings, and which the church faithfully hands down by word and writing from one generation to another."

Ellen Flesseman-Van Leer again says this, "Tradition is the revelation which reaches us by way of the apostles in the living preaching and teaching of the church; that what the church believes and proclaims is identical with the revelation message which the apostles brought. This original message has been faithfully preserved and transmitted from generation to generation through the succession of bishops. However, this same message has also been preserved in writing. That is to say, the unadulterated apostolic teaching is to be known from Scripture."

R. P. C. Hanson, another historian who has done also a great deal of research relative to the meaning of tradition in the early church basically affirms the same thing. He says this, "It is certain that all the fathers believed that the rule of faith was in its contents identical with the contents of the Bible, and that they all regarded the rule as open to being proved from the Bible." And J. N. D. Kelly says exactly the same thing.

Now these historians are telling us that the ultimate standard of authority in the early church is Scripture. The concept of tradition in the early church is not the same as that which is employed by the present-day Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Church has embraced the concept which was promoted by the Gnostics and rejected by the early fathers. Those fathers in the early church in general adhered to the principle of Sola Scriptura. Now this fact is affirmed by the writings of the fathers themselves. I want to spend a few minutes looking at the writings of some of these fathers and I want to begin

with Cyril of Jerusalem. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote a major work called "The Catechetical Lectures" written around 346 AD. This work is important for it deals with the instructing of catechumens in the basics of the Christian faith and this work by Cyril is an exhaustive treatise on the content of what the initiates into the Christian faith were taught in the mid-fourth century. It's a very interesting work and I would suggest that you get it and read it.

Karl Keating has stated that in all of the history of the early church, not one single church father appeals exclusively to the authority of Scripture. He states that they all appeal likewise to tradition as a source of revelation independent of Scripture. Ken Hines, an Eastern Orthodox priest, makes the statement that no church father was ever found writing a concept even similar to Sola Scriptura. We're going to find, however, that such statements are patently false. This is not the view of tradition held by the early fathers.

Keating and many others make the mistake, again, of reading back into the word "tradition" as it was used by the early fathers the concept that is promoted by the Roman Catholic Church today. They do that consistently but as we have seen, the early church's use of the word is very different from that of the Roman Catholic Church. For the early church tradition is Scripture. It is primarily Scripture. If you're talking about the major dogmas of the faith, what is tradition? It is Scripture.

That is affirmed over and over again in the writings of the fathers such as Cyril of Jerusalem. I'm going to give you some quotes from Cyril of Jerusalem. They're in the handout that I gave you. You can follow along. There can be no clear statement in my mind of the [unintelligible] of Sola Scriptura than the following statements from Cyril of Jerusalem. He says this, "This seal have thou ever on thy mind; which now by way of summary has been touched on in its heads, and if the Lord grant, shall hereafter be set forth according to our power, with Scripture-proofs. For concerning the divine and sacred Mysteries of the Faith, we ought not to deliver even the most casual remark without the Holy Scriptures: nor be drawn aside by mere probabilities and the artifices of argument. Do not then believe me because I tell thee these things, unless thou receive from the Holy Scriptures the proof of what is set forth: for this salvation, which is of our faith, is not by ingenious reasonings, but by proof from the Holy Scriptures. But take thou and hold that faith only as a learner and in profession, which is by the Church delivered to thee, and is established from all Scripture. In these articles we comprehend the whole doctrine of faith and for the present commit to memory the Faith, merely listening to the words, and expect that the fitting season the proof of each of its parts from the Divine Scriptures. For the Articles of the Faith were not composed at the good pleasure of men: but the most important points chosen from all Scriptures, make up the one teaching of the Faith...this Faith, in a few words, hath enfolded in its bosom the whole knowledge of godliness contained both in the Old and New Testaments. Behold, therefore, brethren and hold the traditions which ye now receive, and write them on the table of your hearts."

He goes on, "Let us then speak nothing concerning the Holy Ghost but what is written; and if anything be not written, let us not busy ourselves about it. The Holy Ghost Himself spake the Scriptures; He has also spoken concerning Himself as much as He pleased, or as much as we could receive. Be those things therefore spoken, which He has said; for

whatsoever He has not said, we dare not say. Now these things we teach, not of our own ingenuity, but having learned them out of the divine Scriptures used in the Church. All things concerning Christ are put into writing and nothing is doubtful for nothing is without a text. Let us then seek the texts in proof of the passion of Christ. Are our doctrines mere inventions and human mere inventions and human sophisms? Are not Holy Scriptures our salvation? Now heed not any Now heed not any ingenious views of mine; else thou mayest be misled; but unless thou receive the witness of the prophets concerning each matter believe not what is spoken; unless thou learn from Holy Scripture. Receive not the witness from man."

And note what Cyril is saying. He equates the teaching that he is giving these catechumens with tradition which he says must be proven by Scripture, and he quotes 2 Thessalonians 2:15, that major passage of Scripture the Roman Catholic Church uses to validate its own oral tradition. He quotes from Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 where he speaks of "holding to the traditions which have been handed down to you," and he commands them, "Hold these traditions. This is the faith that I am giving to you and this faith that I am giving to you, delivering to you orally, is conformed to Scripture in every point and it must be validated in Scripture at every point." You see, this is not an oral tradition in his view but the teaching of the church which must be validated at every point by Scripture. In other words, it's not an oral tradition independent of Scripture. It is the teaching that is contained in Scripture. So the tradition which he is handing down to these catechumens which he explicitly calls tradition is that which is written in Scripture.

Cyril teaches further that the entirety of the faith is found in Scripture and that the extent of the authority of any teacher, be he a bishop or a layman, goes no further than Scripture, and he includes himself in that. Thus ecclesiastical authority is grounded upon fidelity to Scripture, not principally to its succession. There's not one word in Cyril's "Catechetical Lectures," not one word about adherence to oral tradition. Not one word. He does mention tradition, yes, but we have to define what he means by the term. Tradition in his view is simply the teaching of the church which is founded upon and contained in Scripture. In the view of Cyril of Jerusalem, the Scriptures are the ultimate authority obviously. You can't miss that in what he's just said.

Now that's his explicit teaching. He is a vigorous proponent of the concept of Sola Scriptura and it is a teaching which he is handing down to the catechumens as an implicit article of faith. Now sometimes Roman Catholic apologists will try to discredit the teaching of Cyril of Jerusalem by saying, "Well, you know, he's just one teacher in the church. He's a private theologian. He's speaking as a private theologian. He's not speaking for the church as a whole." But that is false and they know it's false. It seems very consistent that when a church father agrees with Roman Catholic doctrine they are immediately, these fathers are immediately considered to be authoritative and representative of the Magisterium, but you show a Roman Catholic apologist statements from those same fathers which contradict Roman dogma and suddenly these same fathers become private theologians. Cyril is not a private theologian. He is responsible for instructing catechumens in the basics of the faith. He is a bishop of one of the most important Sees in the church and he's part of the, from a Roman Catholic perspective, he's

part of the infallible teaching Magisterium. He is responsible for handing down the teaching of the church which according to the Roman Catholic Church has been handed down from the apostles, and inherent in that teaching, he is handing down the teaching of Sola Scriptura. What's interesting is that what you find upon examination of the overall writings of the church fathers is that these statements by Cyril are simply representative of the overall teaching of the church as a whole.

Now let's look briefly, I want to just quote and go through rather quickly the quotes from some of these major church fathers, and I can only give brief statements and I've gone through and have edited what I'm going to say from the sheets that I've given to you. Obviously because of time, I can only give brief statements but these statements can be multiplied many times over. So please bear with me in the reading of these quotes. They are somewhat numerous but the overall consensus that they're teaching as you listen to what's being said, the overall consensus of their teaching is just overwhelming. Taken together, they make a very profound impact and impression.

Irenaeus, "The Scriptures are the ground and pillar of our faith. The pillar and ground of the church is the Gospel. Since therefore the tradition of the apostles does thus exist in the church, let us revert to the scriptural proof furnished by those apostles."

Tertullian, "You will then make good your proof of his power and his will to do even this, when you shall have proved to us that he actually did it. It will be your duty, however, to adduce your proofs out of the Scriptures as plainly as we do when we prove that he has made his word a Son to himself. You must bring forth the proof which I require of you, one like my own, that is, you must prove to me that the Scriptures show that the Son and the Father to be the same just as on our side the Son and the Father are demonstrated to be distinct. For as on my part, I produce the words of God himself, so you in like manner ought to adduce in opposition to me some text." Understand, when we read through these quotes, you're going to hear the word "proof" over and over and over and over again. Tertullian here is writing obviously against a heretic and he's saying, "You've introduced certain teachings," he says, "I want proof of what you're saying and I want proof from Scripture. I want a text."

He goes on, "Let them, then, prove to us that those angels derived their flesh from the stars. If they do not prove it because it is not written, neither will the flesh of Christ get its origin therefrom, for which they borrowed the precedent of the angels. But there is no evidence of this, because Scripture says nothing." He says, "The Scriptures indeed furnish us with our rule of faith. What we are ourselves, that also the Scriptures are and have been from the beginning. Of them we have our being. From what other source could they derive arguments concerning the things of the faith except when the records of the faith," talking again about heretics. "I do not admit what you advance of your own apart from Scripture. I don't accept anything you tell me," he says, "apart from Scripture. You've got to prove it from Scripture." He says, "I revere the fullness of the Scriptures. Where such a statement is written, Hermogenes must tell us. If it is nowhere written, then let it fear that woe, that woe which impends on all who add or take away from the written word."

Hippolytus. "Let us turn to the exhibition of the truth itself, that we may establish the truth. There is, brethren, one God, the knowledge of whom we gain from the holy Scriptures and from no other source. So all of us who wish to practice tithing will be unable to learn this practice from any other quarter than the oracles of God. Whatever things, then, the holy Scriptures declare, at these let us look and whatsoever things they teach, these let us learn. And as the Father wills our belief to be, let us believe, and as he wills the Son to be glorified, let us glorify him, and as he wills the Holy Spirit to be bestowed, let us receive him not according to our own will nor according to our own mind, nor yet as using violently those things which are given by God, but even as he has chosen to teach them by the holy Scriptures, so let us discern them."

Cyprian. Okay, Cyprian is the next father. To understand the quotes that I'm going to quote, you need to understand the context in which he's writing. His words come out of a conflict that he had with the bishop of Rome over the issue of re-baptizing heretics. The Roman bishop was appealing to a custom which he said had been handed down from the apostles for his teaching and Cyprian opposed his teaching along with a large number of Eastern bishops. They opposed his teaching on the basis of an appeal to Scripture and the authority of Scripture. Scripture had authority over the teaching of the bishop of Rome according to Cyprian, and it had authority over any tradition which supposedly had been handed down by the apostles. He's saying, "You've got to show me this from Scripture. You're claiming you have a custom handed down from the apostles, show me that from Scripture." And this is what he said, "Whence is that tradition? Whether does it descend from the authority of the Lord and the Gospel, or does it come from the injunctions [unintelligible] for the apostles? For that we are to do what is written. God testifies and admonishes, saying to Joshua, the book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written in it. If then it is commanded in the Gospels or is contained in the epistles of the Acts of the apostles, then be this divine and holy tradition observed." But he says, "A custom without truth is error inveterate." A custom without truth, without the confirmation of Scripture, he says, is error inveterate. He says, "But for religious and simple minds, there is a short method whereby to put off error and to discover and extract the truth, for if we return to the head an original a divine tradition, human error ceases. This then it now beholds the priests of God to do who keep the divine commandments, that if the truth has in any respect tottered and faltered, we should go back to our Lord as our head and to the evangelic and apostolic tradition, that so the grounds of our action might spring thence whence both our order and origin took its rise." Now when he says go back to our Lord as our head and to the evangelic and apostolic tradition, it's the ground for what we do and believe, he means holy Scriptures.

Clement of Alexandria. "For those who make the greatest attempts must fail in things of the highest importance unless receding from the truth, the rule of truth itself that cleave to the truth, for we have as the source of teaching the Lord both by the prophets, the Gospel and the blessed apostles," in other words, Scripture. "He then who of himself believes the Scripture and voice of the Lord which by the Lord acts to the benefiting of men is rightly regarded faithful certainly we use it as a criterion in the discovery of things. What is

subjected to criticism is not believed until it is so subjected." What's the criterion for determining if something is true, he says? Scripture. "For we may not give our adhesion to men on a bare statement by them who might equally state the opposite, but if it is not enough merely to state the opinion but if what is stated must be confirmed, we do not wait for the testimony of men but we establish the matter that is in question by the voice of the Lord which is the surest of all demonstrations or rather is the only demonstration." What's the voice of the Lord? He told us a minute ago it's Scripture. That's the only demonstration, he says. "So consequently we also giving a complete exhibition of the Scriptures from the Scriptures itself, from faith persuaded by demonstration." He's saying, "I can demonstrate you that I have apostolic doctrine and that what I teach comes from the apostles because I can verify it from the word of God." He says, "According to those," he said, "According to those fall from this eminence and follow not God wither he leads and he leads us in the inspired Scriptures. Following then the Scriptures, let us establish what has been said for the Lord did not work conceit by the particulars of his teaching but he produces trust in the truth and expansion of mind and the knowledge that is communicated by the Scriptures."

Origen. "But that we may not appear to build our assertions on subjects of such importance and difficulty on the ground that inference alone or to require the extent of our hearers to what is only conjectural, let us see whether we can obtain any declarations from holy Scripture by the authority of which these positions may be more credibly maintained." He says, "Paul presents an example to the teachers of the church, that they should set forth what they speak to the people not as suppositions based on their own opinions but as fortified with the divine testimonies. For as so great and gifted an apostle does not believe that the authority of his sayings can suffice unless he say that what he says is written in the law and the prophets, how much more we who are the least of all observe this, that we do not set forth our own opinions when we teach but those of the Holy Spirit. And proof of all the words which we advance in matters of doctrine, we ought to set forth the sense of Scripture as confirming the meaning which we are proposing for it was all gold which was outside of the temple was not sanctified, so every sense which is outside of the divine Scripture however admirable it may appear to some, is not sacred because it is not limited by the sense of Scripture. Therefore we should not take our own ideas for the confirmation of doctrine unless someone shows that they are holy because they are contained in the divine Scriptures as in the temples of God." Finally he says, "No one should use for the proof of doctrine books not included among the canonized Scriptures."

Novatian says, "The whole of the Old and New Testaments might be adduced in testimony that thus the true faith stands."

Chrysostum. "These then are the reasons that it is necessary to establish them all from the Scriptures and to show with exactness that all that has been said on this subject is not an invention of human reasoning but the very sentence of the Scriptures. We ourselves at this time introduce no inventions of our own but the things which from them we have received we speak unto all, and not even now persuade we thy argumentation but from the divine Scriptures we produce the proof of what we say. All Scripture is given by

inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, for this is the exhortation of the Scripture given, that the man of God may be rendered perfect by it. Without this, therefore, he cannot be perfect. Thou hast the Scriptures," he says, "in place of me." This is Paul writing to Timothy. "If thou wouldst learn anything, thou mayest learn it from them. And if he thus spoke to Timothy who was filled with the Spirit, how much more to us?"

Athanasius. "For the true and pious faith in the Lord has become manifest to all, being both known and read from the divine Scriptures. But our faith is right and starts from the teaching of the apostles and the tradition of the fathers being confirmed both by the New Testament and the Old. While the apostolic tradition teaches in the words of the blessed Peter," okay now, get what he's saying, "the apostolic tradition teaches in the words of the blessed Peter," and he quotes Scripture, "for as much then as Christ suffered for us in the flesh," and then he says and what Paul writes, "looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a people for his own possession and zealous of good works." What is apostolic tradition? Scripture. "The sacred and inspired Scriptures are sufficient to declare the truth."

Hilary of Poitiers. "We believe in accordance with evangelical and apostolic tradition. Having therefore held this faith from the beginning and being resolved to hold it to the end in the sight of God and Christ, we say anathema to every heretical and perverted sect, and if any man teaches contrary to the wholesome and right faith of the Scriptures, let him be anathema. This faith and every part of it is impressed upon us by the evidence of the Gospels by the teaching of the apostles. It is certainly by the words of God, the Scriptures, that we must come to understand the things of God. We must believe God's word concerning himself and humbly accept such insight as he vouchsafes to give. Therefore let private judgments cease, let human reason refrain from passing barriers divinely set. In this spirit we eschew all blasphemous and reckless assertion concerning God and cleave to the very letter of revelation. Each point in our inquiry shall be considered in the light of his instruction." Obviously Scripture.

Theodore says, "This is the confession of the faith of the church. This is the doctrine taught by evangelists and apostles."

Basil the Great. "Therefore let God inspired Scripture decide between us and on whichever side be found doctrines in harmony with the word of God, in favor of that side will be cast the vote of truth. The hearers taught in the Scriptures ought to test what is said by teachers and accept that which agrees with the Scriptures but reject that which is foreign. What is proper for a believer? Not to dare to add anything for if everything which is not of faith is sin, and faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of God, then everything which is outside of the divinely inspired Scripture is sin because it is not of faith. What our fathers said, the same we say, but we do not rest only on the fact that such is the tradition of the fathers for they too followed the sense of Scripture and started from the evidence which a few sentences back I deduced from Scripture and lay

before you." What he's saying is that tradition of the fathers is not sufficient in itself. Just because we say it's tradition of the fathers, it has to be confirmed from Scripture, and they, he says, and they're teaching a tradition, they adhere to the very letter of Scripture.

Augustine. "What more shall I teach you than what we read in the apostle, for holy Scripture fixes the rule of our doctrine lest we dare be wiser than we ought. Therefore I should not teach you anything else except to expound to you the words of the Teacher. Though we at any rate," as he went on to say, "though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which you have received in the lawful and evangelical Scripture, let him be accursed. But the admonition that he," that is, Cyprian, "gives to us that we should go back to the fountain, that is, to the apostolic tradition and this turn the channel of truth to our times, is most excellent and should be followed without hesitation. It is handed down to us therefore as he himself records by the apostles that there is one God, one Christ, one hope, one faith, one church, one baptism. This truth is so brought down to us from the fountain itself." What is the fountain? He's quoting Scripture. What is the tradition? It is Scripture. "Receive, my children," Augustine says, "the rule of faith which is called the symbol or the creed, and when you have received it, write it in your heart and be daily saying it to yourself these words which you have heard are in the divine Scripture, scattered up and down, but this gathered and reduced into one." The creed, what does it come from? Scripture. "The city of God believes also the holy Scriptures old and new which we call canonical and which are the source of the faith by which the just lives, for among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith and the manner of life."

Ephrem Syria. "I have taken my stand, then. I have not turned aside after men to say as they say, He created the waters and gave them to the fishes for their use, he set his seal to the Scriptures and gave them to men for their edification and they bear witness one to the other, for if the fishes flee from the boundary of their realm, they suffer for their leaving, and if men, too, pull up the boundary which is in the Scriptures, their prying is death. The standard of truth has been set in the Scriptures, the Scriptures are set as a mirror. He whose eye is clear seeth the image of truth therein."

Epiphanius. "We can tell the solution of any question not through our own reasonings but from what follows from the Scriptures."

Eusebius. "Polycarp proclaimed that he had received from the apostles this one and only system of truth which has been transmitted by the church. He related all things in harmony with the Scriptures." He says this in addition, "At that time there flourished in the church Hegesippus, Dionysius bishop of Corinth and another bishop, Pinyus of Crete, and besides these Philip and Apolinarius and Melito and Musanus and Modestus and finally Irenaeus. From them has come down to us in writing, the sound and orthodox faith received from apostolic tradition." You want to know how else you can confirm what the apostolic tradition is? They tell you, these early fathers, the content of what it was.

Vincent of Lerins. "Scripture is complete and sufficient of itself for everything and more than sufficient."

John of Damascus. "Moreover by the law and the prophets in former times and afterwards by his only begotten Son, our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, he disclosed to us the knowledge of himself as that was possible for us. All things therefore that have been delivered to us by the law and the prophets, from the apostles and evangelists we receive and know and honor, seeking for nothing beyond these. As knowing all things therefore and providing for what is profitable for each, he revealed that which it was to our profit to know, but what we were unable to bear, he kept secret. With these things let us be satisfied and let us abide by them, not removing everlasting boundaries nor overpassing the divine tradition."

Let me just sum up in a few words what they're saying about Scripture and tradition. Scripture is the pillar and ground of the faith and the fountainhead root, origin and source of all apostolic tradition. Scripture is the fountain and source of all truth. The evangelical authority and apostolic tradition is Scripture. Scripture is the ultimate authority and criterion by which all teaching is established. No teaching of the faith is to be given without Scripture proof. All customs must be validated by the truth. No teacher is to be believed or accepted apart from the proof of what he is teaching is true to Scripture. No teaching is to be believed unless it can be confirmed from Scripture. The Scriptures are complete and sufficient to declare the truth.

There just simply could not be any clearer statement of the principle of Sola Scriptura than the teaching of those fathers. All those fathers coincidentally make up the Magisterium of the church for the first eight centuries. John of Damascus was the last church father, true church father. He wrote in the middle of the eighth century. But in his book "The Harvest of Medieval Theology," Heiko Oberman points out that this concept of tradition which grounded this one that we're saying here about the early church's view, this concept of tradition which grounded the validity of tradition and its content on the teaching of holy Scripture was the universal teaching of the church throughout most of the Middle Ages. But in the 14th century beginning with William of Ockam, a rival concept of tradition was introduced which eventually was adopted by the Council of Trent which then became the authoritative position of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches in adopting this view of William of Ockam that the interpretation of Scripture, the church's interpretation of Scripture is equally as authoritative as Scripture and that there are two sources of apostolic tradition and therefore of revelation: the holy Scriptures and oral tradition. In Trent's view, unlike that of the early church, Scripture is not the final rule of faith. Scripture and tradition are considered to be equally inspired and both are sources of revelation. But this view which Oberman calls a two sources theory of revelation in his book, developed very late in the history of the church.

Brian Tierney who is one of the authors that I suggest that you might read who has done extensive research on the issues of tradition and Scripture and papal infallibility, affirms

the fact that from the very beginning of the church and throughout the centuries as late as the 14th century, the church viewed Scripture as the only source of revelation and the ultimate authority in all matters related to faith and morals and this is what he says, "Before the 13th century there was little trace in the works of the medieval theologians of the view that tradition constituted a source of divine revelation separate from Scripture and little inclination to set up a distinction still less than opposition between scriptural revelation and church doctrine. For 12th century theologians as for the fathers themselves, church and Scripture coadhered. This seems true in the sense that the teaching of Scripture and the teaching of the church were conceived of as essentially one. The men of the Middle Ages lived in the Bible and by the Bible. In their view Scripture recorded divine truth once for all and the living voice of the church guided by the Holy Spirit interpreted that truth and proclaimed it anew to each succeeding generation." And then he continues, "In the course of the 15th and 16th centuries, Ockam's two sources theory of revelation came to be accepted as Catholic doctrine principally in order to refute the Sola Scriptura principle as it was presented by Wycliffe and later by Luther. The line of development flows from Ockam through Henry Todding Avoita, Pierre Deally, John Gersan, William of Waterford and Gabriel Biele to the theologians of Trent."

Now in addition to teaching that the oral tradition of the apostles was recorded in Scripture, Irenaeus and Tertullian also defined for us the doctrinal content of the apostolic tradition or the rule of faith, and you'll have it in the quotes that I've given you. I think it's on the first page there where I say Irenaeus says the content of the rule of faith is such, and I do the same with Tertullian. Basically it consists of the teaching of one God, the Trinity, the Incarnation and deity of Jesus, the life, death and resurrection, ascension and Second Coming of Christ, the Holy Spirit, faith, eternal life, judgment in hell, and the resurrection of the body. That's basically the Apostles Creed.

Karl Keating misrepresents the teaching of the early church when he states that the early church composed creeds as formulations of dogma and that none of the creeds even hint at the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. These are in his view expressions of a body of doctrine handed down orally, independent of Scripture, and grounded upon the authority of the church itself to formulate those doctrines but such a view is a complete distortion of the true facts. What are the creeds? It's simply a summation of the teaching of Scripture. The underlying foundation and formulation of the creeds is the written word of God.

Let me just draw our attention back to Irenaeus for a minute as an example. Irenaeus equates the tradition of the apostles which has been handed down and which is proclaimed orally by the church with the faith. He makes this statement, you can find this quote on the second page of your quotes at the top. He says, "As I have already observed, the church having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world yet as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points of doctrine just as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them and teaches them and hands them down with perfect harmony as if she possessed only one mouth. For although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same, for the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it make

any addition to it nor does one who can but little diminish it." So the apostolic tradition is equal to the faith.

Then in another place he tells us exactly what this faith is in its content just as Tertullian does, and like Tertullian basically it is the creed. So the tradition of the apostles equals the faith which equals the creed.

Then in another place he makes this statement about an article of the creed. "Since therefore the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the church and is permanent among us, let us revert to the scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel in which they record the doctrine regarding God." So tradition equals the faith which equals the creed which is confirmed by proof from the Scriptures.

Brian Tierney states that for the church of the 12th century, the Apostles Creed was not considered to be a body of revelation handed down orally independent of Scripture but it's simply a summary of the overall teaching of Scripture on the major doctrines that are in it. This is what he says, "An extra-scriptural source of faith like the Apostles Creed was held to define various tenets of Christian doctrine with absolute fidelity but it was not considered to be a body of revealed truth supplementary to sacred Scripture, rather the Creed could be called a summary of the contents of Scripture. In this view, Scripture recorded divine truth once for all and the living voice of the church guided by the Holy Spirit interpreted that truth and proclaimed it anew to each succeeding generation."

So what was the Creed then as far as the church was concerned even as late as the 12th century? It was the church's interpretation of Scripture which it taught orally to each succeeding generation. As we have seen, this is the view confirmed by Cyril of Jerusalem in the 4th century, and Augustine in the 5th century, for in speaking to catechumens about the Creed, particularly about the Creed they both say that every point of doctrine is drawn from and is confirmed by the Scriptures.

Now relative to the content of what Irenaeus and Tertullian defined as the apostolic tradition or the Creed, one looks in vain for the distinctive teachings of the Roman Catholic Church on tradition, the papacy relative to papal rule or to papal infallibility, the teachings on Mary, the teachings on purgatory, just to give you a few examples. It is clear that when the early fathers referred to an apostolic tradition, that with respect to the overall content of that tradition and its relationship to Scripture, they differed greatly from the Roman Catholic position that is held today.

We need to understand also that Irenaeus and Tertullian both teach that the content of the tradition is fixed. It cannot be added to or diminished in any way. In other words, the doctrinal content of the faith once for all delivered to the saints will not somehow develop over time. It has a fixed limit which is fixed by Scripture so you can't have a situation as you do have today with the teaching of Roman Catholicism of individuals in a later age having to accept dogmas as necessary for salvation which were never taught by the early church. Someone could object thus, "Do not the fathers appeal to unwritten tradition which was separate from Scripture as an authority?" The answer is: yes. For

example, Scott Hahn quote Tertullian and he quotes him as saying this, "Wherever it shall be clear that the truth of the Christian discipline and faith are present, there also will be found the truth of the Scriptures and of their explanation and of all the Christian traditions." So Scott Hahn says, "You see, here we have a perfect example of a father placing tradition which is unwritten on a par equal in authority with the Scriptures." But what Scott Hahn fails to understand, I hope he fails to understand, and in so doing he has misled many many people, not the least of whom is himself, except this reference to traditions is not a reference to doctrine or to dogma of the faith but to ecclesiastical customs and practices which have been practiced for a long time in the church. It is what the Roman Catholic Church refers to as small t tradition as opposed to capital T tradition, to put it in their terminology. The capital T traditions have to do with the essential dogmas of the faith. Small t traditions have to do with customs and practices that can change. They don't have to be defined necessarily by Scripture, they can change. Dogma cannot change.

The fact of the matter is all references in the fathers to unwritten tradition have to deal with practices and customs. They never ever refer to the essentials of the faith. Ever. We'll look at that in detail next week. What's interesting to me is that when you listen to the Roman apologists and they give you the quotes from church fathers about tradition and they'll quote to you something like Tertullian or they'll quote Irenaeus in the quote that I gave you about where he talks about the proclamation orally of the truth in the church, they never give you the quotes from the fathers without giving you about the authority of Scripture. That's very interesting to me.

In two important respects in the concept and in the content of tradition, two major categories, concept of tradition and a content of what that tradition is and the doctrinal content of it, the Roman Catholic Church has departed from the teaching of the early church with respect, excuse me it's the parting from the teaching of the early church with the result that it has departed from the practice of the early church with regard to the authority of Scripture. The early church believed in Sola Scriptura. The Roman Catholic Church has repudiated this principle in order to elevate its tradition to a position of authority equal to the Scriptures and in so doing it has embraced the heresy of the Gnostics which was condemned by Irenaeus and Tertullian and also with the Jews under the Old Testament dispensation which was condemned by Jesus. And this tells us an important truth. The Roman Catholic Church in its teaching on tradition is no longer truly catholic. It is Roman. And this will become more and more evident as we examine the specific teachings which make up the content of the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

So we see, then, that the Protestant teaching of Sola Scriptura is not only biblical but historical. It is patristic, and not only patristic but the common view of the church up through the majority of the Middle Ages. It is the Roman Catholic Church, not the Protestant which has abandoned the teaching of the early church and has introduced a novel teaching on tradition which in its concept and in its content is neither biblical nor historical, and not only not biblical and that they are not found in Scripture, many of these teachings actually contradict Scripture. Next week we will look at the two

remaining categories on the meaning of tradition in the early church: ecclesiastical custom and the principle of the unanimous consent of the fathers. The unanimous consent of the fathers is a standard that has been officially adopted by the Council of Trent and by Vatican I relative to the interpretation of Scripture unto teachings which are given by the church. It's a standard which they say we can use to judge the teachings which make up the tradition of the Church of Rome. Very interesting principle. We'll look at that next week.