

Silence of Scripture

Many non-Biblical teachings, practices and interpretations have their roots in the mystical and mythological religions. Most were introduced within a few years following the Apostolic era which end around 100 AD. Perhaps you have observed variations of some of them in practice today.

Objectives of the Study are to show that:

1. If Christians are not diligent in their study of the Bible they may believe things that sound right but are only partially true.
2. Every Christian must study their Bible, challenge their belief and be willing to go where God's message takes them.
3. No one has a perfect understanding of God's message even though they are willing to die for their belief.
4. Some current day beliefs, opinions, interpretations or teachings have their roots in some teaching of 'church fathers'. Many of whom did not shed all their Pagan or Gnostic beliefs. In fact, some of them studied in great detail the writings of earlier "church fathers," e.g.; Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna and Augustine in forming their beliefs (perhaps more than the writings of the apostles).
5. In one generation error can creep into one's practices and beliefs.

Everyone is encouraged to be vigilant in understanding the context of passages under consideration when analyzing what was read or heard.

You must not take as the basis for your salvation, anyone's word, not mine, some commentator, a trusted friend, a church leader or one of the "church fathers". Christ is the only way. You must work out your own salvation from the Bible.

Issue - Does Silence Prohibit or Permit

Does the lack of any Bible instruction; (Biblical Silence) provide for any practices or teachings? Tertullian (ca. 150-225) taught that "anything not taught in the Bible could not be practiced." Luther espoused -- "What is not *against* Scripture is *for* Scripture, and Scripture for *it*." Zwingli maintained that *anything* "not enjoined or taught in the New Testament should be unconditionally *rejected*" and others taught anything not forbidden could be practiced.

Response

The statements by Tertullian, Luther and Zwingli cannot all be what God desires as they are opposing views. Obviously when God has spoken, He either prohibits (condemns) or permits (commands) a practice. It is correct to say whatever is specified in a command excludes anything else in relation to what was specified. If this were not true then under the New Covenant there would be no room for one to work out his salvation in fear and trembling.

Nothing would be expedient and there would be no room for trust, faith or love. This would leave one's salvation to be attained by keeping all His commands perfectly, and be like the Old Covenant in the keeping of its requirements.

Today just like the days of the "church fathers" many people agree with Tertullian while others disagree. Both opposing views cannot logically be valid. Great caution must be exercised in researching, analyzing and drawing conclusions about what God has or has not specified

The following examples should help explain the difference in requiring, prohibiting or being silent.

God's Action	Man's Action
Make yourself an ark <u>of gopher (cypress) wood</u> ... now Noah did everything just as God commanded him. (Genesis 7:14, 22)	God specified so Noah built an ark of the wood God Specified. No other kind could be used.

<p>What would be wrong by using oak?</p> <p>The Lord spoke to Moses ... he (Aaron) is to <u>take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord ...</u> Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire, fire not from the altar as God required, in them and added incense and they offered unauthorized, or strange, fire before the Lord contrary to His commandment. (Leviticus 16:12, 10:1)</p> <p>Why were Nadab & Abihu condemned?</p>	<p>Nadab and Abihu each put fire in their censers and laid incense on it, unauthorized, not the specified, fire. God specified that the coals of fire for the censers were to come from the altar before the Lord.</p>
<p>Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ... From Troas we put out to sea and sailed ... we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. (Acts 16:9, 11-12)</p> <p>Could Paul have gone to Macedonia some way other than sailing?</p>	<p>Paul sailed from Troas to Macedonia God did not specify how to go [nothing was said so the Bible was silent] so any mode of transportation was permitted and none was prohibited. But he was required to go.</p>
<p>"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:15).</p> <p>"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).</p> <p>Peter stated "...God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. "...Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 3:21.</p> <p>Why should or should not infants or children be baptized?</p>	<p>Infant baptism has been practiced for years. Radical reformers and Restorationists rejected it as not authorized in the Bible.</p> <p>God excluded their baptism by specifying believers were to be baptized while calling on God; i.e., pleading to God to forgive by dying to sinful life, and being buried into Christ, by immersion, baptism.</p>

Conclusion:

When God speaks, He either requires one to perform some action or to refrain from performing some action.

When He has not spoken one must make a judgment based upon his understanding of what God desires without violating their conscience. His understanding may be flawed due to lack of study, human weakness, some type of bias or by putting self-first; e.g., fame, fortune, honor, ahead of a desire to please God.

No one has a perfect understanding of God's will; if he did he would be God. In fact, the more one studies the greater the probability they will revise, alter or change to some extent a previous understanding. Such is the nature of the acquisition of knowledge.

Jesus told his disciples "Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the

Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear” (John 16:5-12).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready” (1 Corinthians 3:1-2) and to the Romans “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message that is heard is what Christ spoke (Romans 10:17).

Therefore, as one’s knowledge increased so should his faith and as faith and knowledge increases ones understanding changes.

The apostles warned about the time when people would turn away from sound doctrine and follow their own desires. This was evident by John’s letters to the churches of Asia.

In the years following the apostolic era (after 100 AD) the writings of the “church fathers” begin following their own opinions based upon a faulty conclusion about Bible silence which neither requires nor prohibits an action. Over the years their teachings and practices became so bad or corrupt that Catholic Bible scholars rejected the practices and teachings of the Catholic Church at the risk of life and livelihood. Some wanted only to reform some of the worst practices rather than a complete return to the Bible for all teachings and practices.

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Questions

1. One must not put their trust of their salvation in another’s personal interpretation as he must be diligent in studying the Bible in order to reach his own understanding
2. When God speaks, He either requires or prohibits an action
3. The more one studies the greater he will revise, or alter a previous understanding, such is the nature of acquisition of knowledge
4. One’s interpretation when nothing is specified must not be forced upon others as a test of fellowship
5. The apostles warned that people will turn away from sound teachings and follow their own desires.

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