



SOLA SCRIPTURA



A discussion of Sola Scriptura

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Sola Scriptura

Today we hear so many comments by those in the church which often goes toward tearing down the Scriptures. It just amazes me to hear so many people who think they know more than God! Now, in regards to Sola Scriptura, there are five different topics to look at; one talks about traditionalism and Sola Scriptura. Traditionalism certainly has had impact on our churches and in my opinion, it isn't all bad. Oh yes, it has caused problems and divisions in the church when it replaces Scripture teachings. For Sola Scriptura it is Scripture alone that is our authority. Of course the Roman Catholic church disagrees with this and says that the teaching authority of the church is as important. Sola Scriptura is the teaching, founded on the Scriptures themselves, that there is only one special revelation from God that man possesses today, the Bible. Now I believe that Scripture alone is inspired and inherently authoritative. We will look closer at the points in the next few pages, so bear with me please.

Okay, so what is Sola scriptura? Robert Godfrey says that as Protestants we maintain that the Scripture alone is our authority. But perhaps the words, 'the Bible alone' provides a more exact meaning to Sola Scriptura. 'For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' The self-authenticating character of the canon was and is demonstrated and unanimity reached by the people of God establishing the Canon. This goes against the Catholic position. They say that the Scripture by itself is insufficient as the authority of the people of God, and that tradition and the teaching authority of the church must be added to the Scripture. Accordingly, the Roman Catholic Theologian John Eck once said, 'The Scriptures are not authentic, except by the authority of the church,' and then Pope Pius IX said in 1870 that he was tradition. So the only real authority according to Rome is the church. Because of this The Roman Catholic Church has been declared false. The author clarifies his position by saying that he doesn't believe that all truth is found in the Bible or that the Bible is the only form in which God's communicates truth to us. Now wait a minute, in one sense this could be looked at as heresy. The Scriptures makes it clear that the character of Scripture is to be sufficient and clear. And all things necessary for salvation and concerning faith and life are taught in the Bible. Further more, all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. It is the revelation of God, and is therefore true in all that it teaches, but it doesn't say that the church is true in all it says. There was a point in time when Rome

opposed Augustine but Augustine responded by saying, 'Christ has spoken, the matter is settled.' So Augustine did not bow to the authority of the bishop of Rome and it shows further that Augustine did not look to popes or councils for the solution of the question of the canon. Like Augustine, we value the ministry of the church but deny that the church in its offices or councils authoritatively establishes the Scripture on the basis of some knowledge or power not available to Christians generally. We must remember that we have the Holy Spirit as Christians to lead us and guide us. It has been said that what the Holy Spirit says to us must agree with the Scriptures to make sure that it is the Holy Spirit talking to us. I also don't want to act as if I am Bible bashing the Catholic Church, for there are people who do love Jesus in the Catholic Church. But, we must stand united in the belief of Sola Scriptura for there are agents of evil at work wanted to tear the Scripture down, both secular and governmental and sects and other religions.

Okay, traditionalism has affected the teaching of the Scriptures for hundreds of years and there's no easy way to correct this problem. Frame says that following such traditions has led many a church into errors. The Roman Catholic Church even feels that it is equivalent to the teachings of the Scriptures. Resulting errors causes contradiction to Sola Scriptura. Liberals who use Scripture in their theological work will base their thoughts on human wisdom and tradition. Hey! So what's new? They seek to position themselves within the church's theological tradition. I have already said that these are people who think they know more than God. Liberal institutions have changed many evangelical's genuine concern for Sola Scriptura. A liberal institution would not allow, for example, a thesis on the defence of Biblical inerrancy. On the contrary, they would approve something that would prove the errancy of the Bible. This shows you the biasness created by tradition because traditionally a liberal institution would want to create division and doubt toward the Bible. This forces the evangelical into a compromising situation, but we must stand strong not necessarily seeking the support of such people. So, we see that such institutions and people wish to identify themselves with a certain stand thus endorsing it by allowing it to set standards of truth. Also such an institution would select the opposite of such and oppose it. For example, they could select to oppose a certain doctrine. This is known as antithesis. For in Reformed circles, these paradigms of error are seen in movements such as Roman Catholicism, Armenians, the charismatic movement, dispensationalist and such contemporary movements as liberalism, Marxism, feminism, and pop culture. And yes there is truth in what the Reformed say. Even evangelical churches and missions have often swayed in regards to Sola Scriptura. Some if

not many would even consider discussing such a topic. So these people are not liberals as you can see, it can be applied to liberals or fundamentalists. A paradigm of error means that nothing true or good can ever be found in any of them. Some institutions or scholars identify certain ideas or doctrines which are thought to be of some value and identify their weaknesses and then define a position which they think overcomes these weaknesses. But the Inerrancy debate is coloured with all kinds of variances such as questions of interpretation or everything but Biblical inerrancy. The liberals have had their way because today there is no longer a strong view of inerrancy of the Bible in terms of history, geography, science than twenty years ago. But this doesn't make it so. Being a Biblical Archaeologist, you need to understand that nothing, nothing has been found that goes against the Scriptures. Oh, many liberals try to place the 'variant card' but most of these are simply word spellings and nothing else. So, people have grown weary of the inerrancy debate with many seeing a need for common ground without constantly arguing the detailed accuracy of the Biblical texts.

Voelz talks about Scripture and Tradition in as much that there's been a question as to the relationship of evangelicals to the traditions of the church; this includes the church fathers, Augustine and the likes. Some have urged a greater respect for broader Christian traditions, like those of Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy. Liberals go so far as to include non-Christian religions and this is where traditions go off the rails. Converts from Evangelicalism are now questioning the subject of Sola Scriptura. According to the Godfrey, this trend is unfortunate as it weakened the Evangelical witness and it weakened the Bible. Thus we can see that traditionalism has weakened Christian theology. There is an organization called biblicaltraining.org who has introduced solid Christian teaching free in the form of Biblical University classes to strengthen the church. The church needs this because pastors are no longer defending the Scripture and solid theology as they should. We have seen things such as open condemnation of various kinds of music in churches by some groups. This is of course silly! Also, there is a view that the church must be completely separate from modern culture which is hard to understand because we are to go forth and win the world for Christ. We have to participate in the world to do this. Most Christians who love the Lord know that this is difficult these days. If they defend their beliefs they will face ridicule from their work mates, government officials and even other Christians who don't know any better. So, has tradition so hindered the church as to stop teaching about the sufficiency of the scriptures? Of course there's always room for tradition but the Bible has the final word. Sola Scriptura has forbid us to put historical conclusions before that of

Scripture. Interestingly before the reformation, it came to a point that the common people weren't able to read the Bible; it was said to be dangerous unless interpreted correctly. We are almost back to the point again. At that time, interestingly, most of those who learned to read became Protestants! And all Protestants who are of the Reformation are united in understanding the Gospel and in respecting one another as brothers in Christ..

In another point by William Webster, he says that the Reformation restored the principle of Sola Scriptura. So Sola Scriptura is the teaching, founded on the Scriptures themselves codified by the apostles through special revelation of God. It was the Council of Trent in the 16th century where the Roman Catholic Church declared that such revelation was not sufficient in itself but partly in oral tradition of the church. It must be noted that this was not the position of the early church. From the very beginning the post apostolic age with such men as Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement, the Didache and Barnabus you could see the defence against any heresy and also an agreement in the spirit as to their position on the errancy of the Scriptures. Then Irenaeus and Tertullain in the middle second century stated that the teachings of the Bishops were rooted in Scripture and could be proven there of. There was no doctrine ever mentioned of apostolic Tradition. For any doctrine to be accepted, it had to establish it Scriptural basis first. Then in the mid 4th century, Cyril of Jerusalem, the author of Catechetical Lectures expounding the principle doctrines of the faith was all grounded in Scripture. He stated that if any could not be validated from scripture, they were to be rejected. These were all proponents of the principle of Sola Scriptura. The early church operated on the basis of the principle of Sola Scriptura, and it was this principle that the Reformers sought to restore to the church. However, there were traditions that were handled from the apostles but these did not involve doctrines of the faith, for example the date when to celebrate Christmas and/or Easter.

Lastly, we have Richard Bennett with Sola Scriptura where he affirms that Scripture alone is inspired and inherently authoritative. This can be found in 2nd Peter 1:20-21. Peter makes it very clear that the source of interpretation of God's Word must be from the same pure source as the origin of the Scripture itself. There are passages throughout the Scripture which indicate the inspiration of the Scriptures. Sola Scriptura implies 'the Bible alone' as the measure of truth for repeated statements of scripture of the commandment of God. And the principle of 'Sola Scriptura' is consistent with the very way in which the word of truth that comes from God is to be interpreted. Paul says in 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 that '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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’

We know that there are distressing signs that some are seeking to re-define the Evangelical and Reformed movements in traditionalist ways. I will not even begin to mention the different groups that has arisen and fallen in the last forty or so years trying to do this. I have also heard recently of a conference sponsored by that organization in which one speaker made a scathing attack on contemporary forms of worship and worship music.’ I personally believe that the devil just rolls in laughter at this sort of thing; getting Christians to hate each other! We become so busy at focusing our attention on anything but the works of the devil that causes this dissension in the first place. The devil doesn’t have to do much because we do it for him. Yet, it’s obvious that the Reformed and Fundamentalist are as guilty of heresy; that is, if they indicate the charismatic and Pentecostal churches are guilty of heresy. We have seen things such as open condemnation of various kinds of music in churches. Again, I say this is silly and misguided. Those who love Jesus and live for him daily must get themselves amongst the non-saved people; yes, those evil nasty people who condemn us on a daily basis; We must get beside them and treat them with love and show them our Christian love and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to change their lives to Jesus.

I also see the infiltration of theistic evolution into the church and the continued lack of belief in the authority of the Scriptures. For Phil and Cherian there is no question as to the reliability of the Scriptures. You should read and study the Scriptures and not depend on what other tell you what to believe. So, who can you trust and who do you not trust? I recognize this is a much deeper problem. We must be very aware with people who claim to love Christ but who openly stand against the Bible. We should stand against them in love and in the power of the Holy Spirit gently telling them that that isn’t the way. Know that tradition doesn’t trump the Scriptures.

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