

The Five Solas of the Reformation

Solus Christus - Part 2

July 19, 1998

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. Colossians 1:13-18, NKJV

- **Outline**
- Sola Scriptura
 - **Solus Christus**
 - Sola Gratia
 - Sola Fide
 - Soli Deo Gloria
- **Historical Background**

Having established the supremacy of the Scriptures as the only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice, it therefore follows that the remaining four principles should flow from the first and be fully revealed in the Scriptures. This becomes the essence of the issue; extra-biblical writings and church tradition were at odds with the accepted Scriptures and the Reformers attempted to return the theology of the church to its foundation.

- **A Biblical Defense of Solus Christus**
- **The Sacramental Reformation**

23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.²⁴ For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;²⁵ not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—²⁶ He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Hebrews 9:23-28, NKJV

At the time of the Reformation, the Catholic church had formally established that there were seven sacraments—baptism, the eucharist, penance, confirmation, marriage, ordination and extreme unction. The Reformers not only brought the number of sacraments into dispute but also (and primarily) brought the theology of each. The Mass was the center of the liturgical service of the Catholic church and it was originally spoken only in Latin. Although most of the laity could not speak Latin, this was not the most important of the things needed to be reformed.

The two primary points under dispute were the elements of the Mass (communion) and the crucifixion of Christ. The Reformers argued against the Catholic position that the bread and the wine, although they retained the outward appearance, actually became in substance the flesh and blood of Christ. Even though some of the Reformers disagreed on the details of this issue, it was clear that the idolatry of showing reverence toward the wine and bread was refuted.

Another aspect of the Mass that came under reform was the belief that the Priests were actually breaking the body of Christ each time they administered the Lord's Table. This of course was an extreme heresy to the Reformers because of the theological implications and the clear contradictions of the Scriptures. The Reformers taught that Christ died for the Elect, once for all and after His death ascended to the right hand of the Father where He sits until His return apart from sin for salvation.

- **Christ as Mediator**

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,⁷ for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:5-7, NKJV

Mariology is the body of doctrine surrounding the Catholic position on the deification of Mary the mother of Jesus. Perhaps the first hint of emphasizing Mary came from Irenaeus, who during the second century, contrasted Eve's disobedience with Mary's obedience. The contrast came from Paul's contrast of Adam's disobedience with that of Jesus' obedience. This evaluation although accurate does not justify the correlation between Mary and Eve. It was further believed that this correlation meant that Mary was central to the salvation of the world through the new creation and thus making her co-redemptrix with her Son and mother of the Church. Later in 431 at the Council of Ephesus the term Mother of God (theotokos) was adopted as an official title for Mary. It was later believed by the Church that the extrabiblical writings which describe the Assumption of Mary were authoritative and this doctrine and related doctrine became formal positions of the Church. Even today pressure is being put upon the Pope to formally recognize Mary as co-mediatrix with Christ as the two of them (along with the recognized Saints) are interceding on behalf of the Church with prayers to the Father.

However, we can see why the Reformers objected so strongly to this teaching. Such doctrines, whether or not they are supported by the extra-biblical writings, are in clear contradiction with the writing of the New Testament where Jesus is described as the only Mediator between man and God. Peter himself declares that there is no other name by which a man can be saved other than the name Jesus. (Acts 4:11)

The scriptures also declare that it is Jesus who intercedes on our behalf (Hebrews 7:23-28) and His sacrifice is sufficient to atone or propitiate for the sins of the Church. There is no biblical basis for ascribing such attributes to any other than Christ.

- **Christ as Priest**

11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Hebrews 9:11-15, NKJV

For reasons which we will consider more deeply in our study of Sola Gratia, the Catholic church believed that the church was the dispensary of grace. It was through the church that grace which emanated from Christ was dispensed to the individual. Whether it be saving grace or grace which grants repentance, the church was the mechanism through which such grace was received. It followed then that such grace should be dispensed by no ordinary individual within the church and the priestly order developed into an additional layer of intercession.

The priesthood of the individual believer (1 Peter 2:4-10) was a key doctrine which disputed this intercessory role of the priest. It was taught that every truly regenerate was able to approach the throne of God to declare praises, confess sins, and offer supplications.