

Sola Scriptura: Scripture Alone

Introduction: Two key questions

- How do we know God?
- How then do we live?

I. How do we know God? A question of revelation

- **God's "general" revelation: Creation** - Ps 19:1-6, Rom 1:19-23
- **God's "special" revelation: Scripture** - 2 Tim 3:15-17

i) *God-breathed (cf 2 Peter 1:19-21)*

ii) *Teaches Christ (cf John 5:39; Luke 24:44-48)*

iii) *Sufficient for life and godliness*

• **God's continuing revelation: the Church?**

An appeal to John 16:23...

“This truth (of the gospel) and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us... (The synod) receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament... as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.”

- Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session IV (1546), First Decree

“For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity...Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.”

- Dei Verbum II.9, Second Vatican Council, 1965

Four claimed streams of revelation:

B	R
I	E

• **God's complete revelation: how has the Spirit guided the Church into "all truth?"**

John 14:26

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

John 15:26

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

John 17:20

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word..."

John 20:30-31

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

"We have learned from **none others** the plan of our salvation, than from those whom the gospel has come down to us, which they did **at one time proclaim in public**, and, **at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures**, to be the ground and pillar of our faith."

- Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1

Summary: *The written Scriptures are the definitive and complete revelation of God: the Father perfectly revealing the Son through the Spirit inspired testimony of the Apostles, that we might be made wise for salvation in Christ and equipped sufficiently for the godly life.*

Implication: God has revealed Himself, so rejoice and listen to Him

II. How then do we live? A question of authority

i) **"Here I Stand:" Authority at the time of the Reformation**

The tension between Scripture and Tradition:

Tradition I - Scripture as the authoritative standard for church tradition

Tradition II - Scripture and Tradition as jointly authoritative

"He who does not accept the doctrine of the Church of Rome and pontiff of Rome as an infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures, too, draw their strength and authority, is a heretic."

- Sylvester Prierias, *Dialogue on the power of the Pope*, 1518

"This, then, is the difference. Our opponents locate the authority of the church outside God's Word; but we insist that it be attached to the Word, and do not allow it to be separated from it."

- John Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.8.13

ii) **"Your word is truth:" Authority today**

A. The Church is ruled by Christ through the word, not the other way around

"It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others."

- *Dei Verbum*, II.10

"Scripture is not the word of the church; the church is the church of the word... The church exists in the space which is made by the Word."

- John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Approach*

B. Sola Scriptura, **not** nuda Scriptura

The Bible - Magisterial authority



Tradition, Reason and Experience - Ministerial authority

C. God's word is to be in the driving seat of the Church (cf Acts 2:42, 4:33, 5:42, 6:4)

2 Timothy 4:1-2

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

"We believe that today, when this word of God is proclaimed in the Church by preachers who have been legitimately called, then the very word of God itself is proclaimed and received by the faithful."

- *Second Helvetic Confession, Ch. I*

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 4:15-16

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

D. God's word is to govern personal discipleship - Ps 1, John 6:68, Luke 8:15

"For our faith rests on the revelation made to the Prophets and Apostles who wrote the canonical books, not on revelation, if such there be, made to any other teacher."

- *Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Ia.1.8*

E. God's word is trustworthy even in the face of challenges

- Suffering
- Science
- Social change