

**Introduction**  
**to the**  
**5 Solas**

## What are the 5 Solas?

The 5 Solas are stated in Latin. The word 'Sola' means 'Alone'. The 5 solas are:

- Sola Scriptura, meaning Scripture Alone
- Sola Fide, meaning Faith Alone
- Sola Gratia, meaning Grace Alone
- Solus Christus, meaning Christ Alone,
- Soli Deo Gloria, meaning To God be the Glory Alone

You may be thinking: Why the different versions of 'Sola', 'Solus', 'Soli'? In Latin grammar, 'Sola' is feminine, 'Solus' is masculine and thus used for Christ (Solus Christus). 'Soli' is used for an indirect object. (What is an 'indirect object'? Consider the sentence: "The boy kicks the ball to the girl". "The boy" is the subject, "the ball" is the direct object, whereas "the girl" is the indirect object. An indirect object answers the question: 'to whom', 'for whom' or 'for what'. Hence Soli Deo Gloria is "TO God be the glory alone".)

## How to remember?

There is a logical way of recalling the 5 Solas without missing out any of them. You can think of it this way:

- The starting point is the basis of truth: **the Scripture**
- The ending point is **the glory of God**

The start and the end correspond to the first two questions of the shorter catechism: [the ending point:] What is the chief end of man? [the starting point:] What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

- In between the start and the end is the crucial question of **salvation**. How am I saved? The nub of the answer is expressed in **6 words**:

**By grace, through faith, in Christ.**

A slightly expanded version for clarity is:

**By [God's] grace,  
through [the instrumentality of] faith,  
in [the Person and Work of] Christ.**

You remember the 5 Solas like you would remember a story with a **start**, **middle** and **end**. It is a love story, where God chose to set his love upon an innumerable group of un-loveable people, and did all that is necessary to redeem them to himself in Christ, so that forever He is their God, and they are his people. The world is seeking for the ever illusive fairy-tale ending, but it is only God's elect who can truly and really live happily ever after. The happiness is in having God as their portion.

## Why are the 5 Solas important?

The 5 Solas form the pillars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation. They stand in contradistinction to the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. These errors had corrupted the gospel of Christ so that it has become another gospel. Scripture has very strong words for those who corrupt the gospel:

*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. [Gal 1:6-9]*

God raised up men to deliver his people from the bondage of these errors. You are blessed to be brought up in the rich spiritual heritage of the Protestant Reformation. You must know the errors and their dangers, you must know the truth, you must know what you are protesting and against whom you are protesting.

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free [John 8:32]*

To properly understand the 5 Solas, you need to understand the issues/questions to which the Solas answer in opposition to teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, for each of the 'Sola':

- You need to be able to articulate what is the key issue/question at hand;

- You need to be able to articulate the point of contention between Rome and the Reformation. This means articulating what is Rome's position and what is our position; and lastly,
- You need to be able to defend our position, even if it is a simple defence. Scripture says that we must *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear* (1 Pet 3:15). If someone asks you why Sola Fide, what would you say? Because my pastor says so? Because my dad and mum says so? And if you say because it is taught in the Scriptures, then are you able to point out where in the Scriptures? Now 'defending' may seem like a difficult thing, but it isn't because built into the catechism is a defence of our position... and you have already gone through the entire catechism once during your grade 1-3 class! You just need to recognise which are the relevant catechism questions and answers and then strengthen that with scriptural proofs.

In addition to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, you will also be given some snippets of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Shorter Catechism is 'Short'. It has been shortened by leaving out information for the sake of teaching children and young believers. Yes, you are a child, for the present, but you are growing older, and you won't be a child for much longer. You need to know that there is a fuller body of instruction in the Confession of Faith, and you need to have an appreciation of its robustness, clarity and beauty.

## Miscellaneous

- In your handouts, 'Rome' is short for the 'Roman Catholic Church'. In quotations from the reformers, sometimes the old and archaic word 'papist' is used to refer to the 'Roman Catholic Church'. Just as Rome would call us 'Protestants', we would call them 'Papists'.
- In order to understand the position of Rome, some information is presented of their beliefs and practices. This is done so that you can contrast the Scriptural teaching with Rome's corruptions.
- The position of Rome is always something that is added to corrupt Scriptural teaching: Scripture + Tradition; Faith + Works; Grace + Merit; Christ + Priests + Sacramentalism; God's glory + Man's glory.

# Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)

## Key Issue / Question

In Christianity, who or what has the **authority to tell you what is sin or not sin, what is right or wrong, what you can do or cannot do?**

In other words, who or what has the **authority to bind your conscience?**

## Point of Contention

Teaching of Rome	Teaching of the Reformation
<p><b>Authority= Scripture + Church Tradition</b> (Tradition = the 'Magisterium' of the Catholic Church. Eg. Pope speaking ex cathedra; Decisions of church councils etc.)</p> <p><b>Tradition interprets Scripture.</b> ("No one ... shall... presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church... hath held and doth hold...", Council of Trent 4<sup>th</sup> Session)</p> <p>The individual is not allowed to interpret the Word of God, but accept the interpretation determined by Church Tradition.</p> <p>The implication is that the Church Tradition is a higher authority than the Scripture, since it determines authoritatively what Scripture means.</p>	<p><b>Authority = Scripture Alone</b> (Sola Scriptura)</p> <p><b>Scripture interprets Scripture</b> (What is known as 'The analogy of faith', WCF 1.9)</p> <p><b>Tradition is subject to Scripture</b></p> <p>The individual is to study the Word of God with the Holy Spirit's illumination (Acts 17:11). The Holy Spirit teaches the believer through the Scriptures.</p> <p>It is God who, through his Word and Spirit, teaches the believer. The Church, as a body of believers, is thus in subjection to the Word of God.</p>

Comment:

The dispute is **NOT** about the inspiration of the Scriptures (that Scriptures are God-breathed, hence the very Word of God). Neither is it about the authority of the Scriptures per se. It is whether the authority is through Scriptures **ALONE**. This then leads to a related issue of the interpretation of the Scriptures: “Who determines the right interpretation of Scripture if it is not Church tradition?” Well, it is the Holy Spirit who teaches every believer who studies the Scripture, comparing Scripture with Scripture. “So how am I to study it, if I can’t read it in a language that I can understand?” Do you now see why God raised up men who hazard their lives to translate the Word of God?

Note: ‘Sola Scriptura’ does **NOT** mean that we cannot be taught by our creeds, confessions and catechisms. What it means is that what is taught is **only binding upon us in so far as they accurately represent the truth of Scripture**. Our creeds, confessions and catechisms are “Subordinate Standards”. “Subordinate” means lower in rank, under authority. They are subordinate to the Word of God. They are summaries of what the Bible says and so it is still ultimately what the Bible says that binds our consciences. Yet “Subordinate” does **NOT** mean that we should have a low regard of them. On the contrary, we have a **high regard** of them, because we believe that **they accurately represent the truth of Scripture**.

## Westminster Standards

- **WSC 2:** What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?  
A. The **WORD OF GOD**, which is contained in the **SCRIPTURES** of the Old and New Testaments, is the **ONLY rule** to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him
- **WCF 1.10: The Supreme Judge**, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, **can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture**.
- **WCF 20.2:** **God alone is Lord of the conscience**, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary

**to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith on worship.** So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

- **WCF 1.9: The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself;** and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

## Scriptural Proofs

- **[2 Tim 3:16-17]** 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.
- **[Acts 17:11]** These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.
- **[John 15:26-27]** But when the **Comforter** is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even **the Spirit of truth**, which proceedeth from the Father, **he shall testify of me**: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.
- **[John 16:13]** Howbeit when he, the **Spirit of truth**, is come, **he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come**.
- **[1 Cor 2:10-16]** But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so **the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God**. Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but **the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God**. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which

**the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

## Other Quotations

- *Martin Luther at the Leipzig Disputation 1519:*  
"I assert that a council has sometimes erred and may sometimes err. Nor has a council authority to establish new articles of faith. **A council cannot make divine right out of that which by nature is not divine right.** Councils have contradicted each other, for the recent Lateran Council has reversed the claim of the councils of Constance and Basel that a council is above a pope. **A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it.** As for the pope's decretal on indulgences **I say that neither the Church nor the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture. For the sake of Scripture we should reject pope and councils.**"
- *Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, 1521:*  
"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), **I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.** I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."  
[When Luther says 'by clear reason', he means by clear reason **from the Scriptures**]
- *John Calvin:*  
"The difference between us and the papists is that they do not think that the church can be 'the pillar of the truth' unless she presides over the word of God. We, on the other hand, assert that it is because she reverently subjects herself to the word of God that the truth is preserved by her and passed on to others by her hands."



# Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

## Key Issue / Question

How can I be justified [made right] before God?

## Point of Contention

Teaching of Rome	Teaching of the Reformation
Faith in Christ + Good Works => Justification	Faith in Christ => Justification + Good Works
Note that 'Good Works' acts as a requirement for Justification	Sola Fide Faith in Christ Alone is all that you need for Justification. 'Good Works' is now a fruit/evidence of faith in Christ.

Comment:

The core point of dispute of the Protestant Reformation was the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Out of the 5 Solas, Sola Fide was the spark that ignited the Reformation. The key issue is deeply personal: How can an unjust person such as I, possibly survive the judgment of a just and holy God?

*[Now, you need to know something of the Roman Catholic teachings. As you read it, observe how much differences there are between Rome and what you have been taught in the catechisms; see how much of the gospel has been corrupted until it has become another gospel; and see why the reformers regarded Rome as the apostate church, the false church.]*

For the Roman Catholic Church, justification begins with baptism (known as the first plank of justification), in which the person who is baptised receives an infusion of "justifying grace"; something happens inwardly in which the soul is infused with divine grace. *[Rome mixes up justification and sanctification].* If the person

assents and cooperates with the infused grace, then you are in a state of justification [*This is essentially the error of baptismal regeneration. The source of error is in Rome's view of the sacraments... see the notes on Sola Christus*]. You remain in that state of justification unless you commit a mortal sin. [*Catholics believe that sins are venial or mortal. Venial sins inflict a slight wound to the soul, but mortal sins are so evil that they're considered deadly – they kill grace*]. If you commit a mortal sin, you will become **un-justified** [hence Rome teaches that you can lose your salvation], because the mortal sin kills the inhabiting grace that was infused into you at baptism. So now, you need to be **re-justified**. This is done via another sacrament called the sacrament of **PENANCE** (which Rome calls the second plank of justification). In this sacrament, you need to go to a priest to confess all your sins, the priest will then assign you a penance to perform, you then say a prayer of contrition, thereafter the priest, acting in the person of Christ, will absolve you from your sins, and then you leave the confessional to do your penance. A penance may be to do something nice for your enemy every day for a week. It may be to visit a nursing home or hospital one day a week for a month. It may be to donate time to a soup kitchen or clothing bank. It may involve any one of the corporal or spiritual works of mercy. Or it may be a set of prayers, such as saying the *Our Father* or the *Hail Mary*, a certain number of times. **Penance is something you DO; it is that 'Good Work' for you to DO in order to be re-justified.**

Hence Rome teaches: Faith in Christ + Good Works (PENANCE) => Justification

In contrast, the Reformers taught that faith in the person and work of Christ is all that is needed to be saved (Rom 1:17, Gal 2:16). The contention about salvation is **NOT** about Faith in Christ per se. Rather, it is about

Faith in Christ + **SOMETHING ELSE**      OR      Faith in Christ **ALONE**

Is there a '**SOMETHING ELSE**' to add onto Faith. The answer is that **NOTHING ELSE is needed**. Faith in Christ **ALONE** is all you need for Justification. And if your faith is a true faith, then good works will be the evidence / fruit / proof of that faith

## Westminster Standards

- **WSC 33:** What is justification?  
A. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the **righteousness of Christ** imputed to us, and **received BY FAITH ALONE**.

- **WSC 86:** What is faith in Jesus Christ?  
A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel
- **WSC 30:** How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?  
A: The **Spirit** applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by **working faith in us**, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.
- **WSC 31:** What is effectual calling?  
A: Effectual calling is the **work of God's Spirit**, whereby, *[HE FIRST REGENERATES US:]* convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, *[AND THEN...]* he doth persuade and **enable us** *[BY WORKING FAITH IN US, SO THAT WE HAVE THE FAITH ...]* to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel. *[... AND THAT IS WHY THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL TO YOU IS EFFECTIVE, WHILE TO OTHERS IT IS NOT].*

Do you realise that WSC31 is teaching you a very important truth, that:  
"Regeneration precedes Faith"

Regeneration happens first, and then we exercise faith.

"Regeneration" = Born again; our spiritually dead soul is brought back to life. By nature, in Adam, you are SPIRITUALLY DEAD, and spiritually dead people CANNOT EXERCISE FAITH, because faith in Christ is a SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY OF THE SOUL. You have to be made spiritually alive first, and then you can exercise faith.

## Scriptural Proofs

- **[Rom 1:17]** For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, **The just shall live by faith.**
- **[Gal 2:16]** Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: **for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**

- **[Rom 10:9-13]** That if **thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, **Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.** For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. **For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**
- **[James 2:14-26]**. This passage teaches that true faith produces good works.

## Other Quotations

- *Martin Luther on Rom 1:17*  
 “There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely, by faith. And this is the meaning. The righteousness of God is revealed by the Gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by faith. Here, I felt that I was altogether born again and the very gates of paradise opened up before me.”
- *John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 18, Section 2*  
 Let it be a fixed principle in our hearts, that the kingdom of heaven is not the hire of servants, but the inheritance of sons.
- *Martin Luther*  
 “Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone.”

*[Note: You cannot see ‘Faith’ in the heart. Neither can you see ‘Justification’. What can you see? ‘Good Works’. So how do you know that what you cannot see is real? By observing the evidence / fruit in the Good Works. So if the faith is real, then it will produce the fruit of good works. Hence a faith that saves is never alone.]*

- *R. C. Sproul, Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*  
 “The relationship of faith and good works is one that may be distinguished but never separated... if good works do not follow from our profession of faith, it is a clear indication that we do not possess justifying faith.”

# Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

## Key Issue / Question

Why did God choose to save me?

Is it because of some inherent good in me? ...or some good that I did?

In other words, did I do something to merit God's favour? ...to merit salvation?

## Point of Contention

Teaching of Rome	Teaching of the Reformation
Grace + [My] Merit => Salvation	Grace Alone => Salvation Sola Gratia

Comment:

'Merit salvation' means you did something that is good, worthy of praise, worthy of God's favour, so that God **owes** it to you to **reward** you with salvation; you **earned** it.

Grace is the **UNMERITED** favour of God.

**You cannot have 'grace' and 'merit' together.** It is either one or the other, but not both.

*Rom 11:6 "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."*

Scripture teaches that Salvation is **A GIFT**. Even **your Faith** is **A GIFT**.

***Eph 2:8-10** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is **the gift of God**: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Sola Gratia is an important context for the right understanding of Sola Fide.

Two people can say they believe in Sola Fide: justified by faith alone. One says that his faith is a gift from God. But the other says that his faith is something that originated in him, that he did himself. Who is correct?

If faith is something you did yourself, then your faith **BECOMES A WORK**. And if it is a work, then it is **NO MORE OF GRACE**.

But Scripture teaches that even **your faith IS A GIFT**. Faith is a **GOD-GIVEN MEANS** whereby **we receive the GOD-GIVEN JUSTIFICATION**.

**Everything**, including faith, is **GRACIOUSLY GIVEN BY GOD**. Hence **Sola Gratia**. And hence God's covenant with his elect in Christ, is aptly called **the Covenant of GRACE**.

## Westminster Standards

- **WSC 20:** Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?  
A: God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into **a covenant of grace**, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.
- **WCF 3.5:** Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, **out of his mere FREE GRACE and love, [ 'ALONE':] WITHOUT any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.**

- [Faith is a gift] **WSC 30:** How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?  
A: The **Spirit** applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by **working faith in us**, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.
- **WCF 10.2:** This effectual call is of **God's free and special GRACE ALONE**, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby **enabled** to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.
- **WSC 33:** What is Justification?  
A: Justification is an act of **God's free grace...**
- **WSC 34:** What is Adoption?  
A: Adoption is an act of **God's free grace...**
- **WSC 35:** What is Sanctification?  
A: Sanctification is a work of **God's free grace...**
- **WSC 86:** What is faith in Jesus Christ?  
A: Faith in Jesus Christ is **a saving grace...**
- **WSC 87:** What is repentance unto life?  
A: Repentance unto life is **a saving grace...**

## Scriptural Proofs

- **[2 Thess 3:1-2]** Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: **for all men have not faith.** [*Faith is not natural in sinful men*]
- **[Eph 2:8-10]** For **by grace are ye saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God: Not of works**, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

- **[Rom 9:13-18]** As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.** For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

## Other Quotations

- *Spurgeon:*  
 “If any man be saved, he is saved by Divine grace, and **by Divine grace alone**; and **the reason of his salvation is not to be found in him, but in God.** We are not saved as the result of anything that we do or that we will; but we will and do as the result of God's good pleasure, and the work of his grace in our hearts.”
- *Martin Luther, commentary on Titus 3:4-8*  
 “Yes, dear friend, you must first possess heaven and salvation before you can do good works. Works never merit heaven; heaven is conferred purely of grace.”
- *Arthur Pink, The Grace of God*  
 “Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favour of God exercised in the bestowment of blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded from them. Nay, more; it is the favour of God shown to those who not only have no positive deserts of their own, but who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving. It is completely unmerited and unsought, and is altogether unattracted by anything in or from or by the objects upon which it is bestowed. Grace can neither be bought, earned, nor won by the creature. If it could be, it would cease to be grace. When a thing is said to be of ‘grace,’ we mean that the recipient has no claim upon it, that it was in nowise due him. It comes to him as pure charity, and, at first, unasked and undesired.”



# Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

## Key Issue / Question

How is grace mediated to us?

## Point of Contention

Teaching of Rome	Teaching of the Reformation
<p>God's grace is mediated <b>through Christ + the Church</b> via an elaborate <b>system of priests and sacramental works</b>.</p> <p>Through this sacramental system, Rome effectively controlled the Christian's life from birth (baptism) to death (extreme unction) and even beyond (masses for the dead).</p>	<p>God's grace is mediated <b>through Christ alone</b>. There is no other mediator, not the pope, not the priests, not the Saints, not Mary. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man. (1 Tim 2:5) We receive grace directly from Christ, through faith.</p> <p>The reformers argued that <b>Rome</b>, through this sacramental system, <b>had usurped the prerogatives of Christ</b>, making itself the dispenser of God's grace. <b>It is Christ ALONE</b>, and not the church, <b>that dispenses grace</b>.</p> <p>Solus Christus.</p>

Consider the following for a taster on the differences of teaching:

- How am I justified?
  - Rome says yes to the merit of Christ death **BUT** I obtain justification through the sacrament of baptism, and then if I lose it through mortal sin, I get it back through the sacrament of penance. So you have Christ + Baptism + Penance.
  - Reformation: Scripture says by faith in the Person and Work of Christ alone (Rom 4:23-25).
  
- How can my sins be forgiven even after I become a Christian?
  - Rome: Sacrament of Penance: Confess to the priest and do penance. Penance is essentially an attempt to punish yourself for your sins again. Christ + Earthly priest + self-punishment
  - Reformation: Repent and confess your sins to Jesus. There is no need to punish yourself for your sins. Christ is the perfect sacrifice. His blood cleanses us from every sin. (1 John 1:9, 1 Tim 2:5).
  - Note: Rome says **DO PENANCE** while Scripture says **REPENT**. See WSC 87: repentance is not something you do to punish yourself. It is a change, a turning around of heart and mind. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more, not go and do some good deeds, much less go and inflict punishment on yourself. [Works religion will try to atone for sin by doing good or by inflicting punishment on self.]
  
- What happens when I die?
  - Rome: Unless you live an exceptionally good and holy life, you will end up in a temporary place called purgatory: a temporal punishment for sin, and for the cleansing from the attachment to sin. It is a place for people not bad enough to go to hell and not good enough to go to heaven. [**So Christ's work is not perfect - you still need to be purged of your sins.**] How do you get out of purgatory quickly? You need indulgences (penance that the living do for the dead) + intercession of dead saints + prayers of those living catholics. [**This means Christ's work is not sufficient. You need Christ + all the above excesses.**]
  - Reformation: Christ death fully satisfies God's justice for my sins. He kept the covenant of works perfectly. He merited heaven for me. When I die, my soul is made perfect.

Note: Rome's system of priests and sacramental works **is built upon the wrong belief that the sacraments HAVE INHERENT POWER IN THEM**. Rome calls it *ex opere operato*: "by the very fact of the actions being performed". In the reception of the grace conferred *ex opere operato*, FAITH IS NOT NECESSARY. Any positive effect comes not from worthiness or faith but from the sacrament as an instrument of God.

If you apply this concept of 'inherent power' to the water in the sacrament of Baptism, you will end up with the doctrinal error of baptismal regeneration (all who are baptised are saved).

[Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 1238] The baptismal water is consecrated by a prayer of epiclesis (either at this moment or at the Easter Vigil). The Church asks God that through his Son **the power of the Holy Spirit may be sent upon the water**, so that **those who will be baptized in it may be "born of water and the Spirit."**

Similarly, in the sacrament of the Eucharist (what we call the Lord's Supper), with inherent power in the bread and wine, they end up in the rabbit hole of transubstantiation:

[Catechism of the Catholic Church, para 1333] At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, **by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood.**

This is **SUPERSTITION**.

## Westminster Standards

- **WSC 21:** Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?  
A: The **ONLY Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ**, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.
- **WCF 27.3:** **The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them;** neither does the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that does administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.
- **WSC 96:** What is the Lord's Supper?  
A: The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is shewed forth; and the worthy receivers are, **NOT** after a corporal and carnal manner, **BUT BY FAITH**, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.
- **WSC 87:** What is repentance unto life?  
Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, **turn from it unto God**, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.

## Scriptural Proofs

- [1 Tim 2:5] For there is **one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**
- [John 14:6] Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**
- [Acts 4:9-12] If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

## Other Quotations

- *Heidelberg Catechism Q30*: Do such then believe in the only Saviour Jesus, who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?  
A: No; although they may make their boast of Him, yet in act they deny the only Saviour Jesus. For either Jesus is not a complete Saviour, or they who by true faith receive this Saviour, must have in Him all that is necessary to their salvation.
- *Zwingli (Article 17/67)*:  
“That Christ is the one eternal high priest; from this we deduce that all those who pretend to be high priests, oppose the honour and power of Christ; indeed, they reject it.”
- *C.H. Spurgeon*:  
“If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness, which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there be one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there be one contingency—one “if,” or “though,” or “but,” about my soul’s salvation, THEN AM I A LOST MAN!”

# Soli Deo Gloria

## (To God be the glory Alone)

### Key Issue / Question

Soli Deo Gloria is a doxology: an expression of praise to God.  
It is an outcome of the preceding 4 Solas.

### Point of Contention

Teaching of Rome	Teaching of the Reformation
<p>IF the preceding 4 Solas are not upheld:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If Scripture is subject to the Church, rather than the Church to Scripture</li><li>• If Salvation is<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ By Grace + My Merit (however little it is)</li><li>○ Through Faith + My Works (however small it is)</li></ul></li><li>• If Grace is Mediated through Christ + the Church via Popes, Priests, Saints, Mary, (rather than only through Christ alone),</li></ul> <p>THEN God gets some of the glory and Man gets some of the glory.</p> <p>It does not detract one bit even if you rehash it to say that: God gets <b>most</b> of the glory and Man gets a <b>tiny bit</b> of the glory.</p> <p>The point is that <b>God DOES NOT GET ALL OF THE GLORY</b>. Man robs the glory from God, even if it is just robbing a little of it.</p>	<p>IF the preceding 4 Solas are upheld:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If the Church is subject to the authority of Scripture</li><li>• If Salvation is<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ By Grace Alone</li><li>○ Through Faith Alone</li></ul></li><li>• If Grace is Mediated through Christ Alone</li></ul> <p>THEN salvation from start to finish is all of God.</p> <p>God gets all of the glory and man gets none of it.</p> <p>Soli Deo Gloria: To God be the Glory ALONE.</p>

Comment:

Soli Deo Gratia is easier said than truly embraced in the heart.

Because the logical flip-side of Soli Deo Gloria is the confession that **Man gets no glory at all.**

“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” (Isa 6:5)

“I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:18-21)

This woe-is-me self-indictment and this no-more-worthy posture of the heart is a difficult pill to swallow. It is totally contrary to the gospel of self-esteem in this day and age.

But when regeneration is effected by God in the soul, then man is brought to see that he is spiritually bankrupt, destitute and totally depraved before God, and that is when man comes before God with a broken and a contrite spirit.

Soli Deo Gloria means that we confess "Man is nothing" with as much force as "God is everything".

## Westminster Standards

- **WSC 1:** What is the chief end of man?  
A: Man's chief end is to **GLORIFY GOD, and to enjoy him for ever.**
- **WSC 7:** What are the decrees of God?  
A: The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, **FOR HIS OWN GLORY**, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.
- **WSC 46:** What is required in the first commandment?  
A. The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and **GLORIFY HIM** accordingly.

- **WSC 107:** What doth the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us?  
A: The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, which is, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, **AND THE GLORY**, for ever, Amen", teacheth us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, **ascribing kingdom, power, and GLORY to him**; and, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.
- **WCF 3.3:** By the decree of God, **for the manifestation of his glory**, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.
- **WCF 3.5:** Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his free grace and love alone, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all **to the praise of his glorious grace**.
- **WCF 3.7:** The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, **for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures**, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, **to the praise of his glorious justice**.

## Scriptural Proofs

- **[Rom 11:33-36]** O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.
- **[Matt 6:13]** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

- **[Rev 4:11]** Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.
- **[Rev 5:12]** Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.
- **[Isa 42:8]** I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

## Other Quotations

- *Thomas Watson, Body of Divinity:*  
**What are we to understand by God's glory?** There is a twofold glory: [1] The glory that God has in himself, his intrinsic glory. Glory is essential to the Godhead, as light is to the sun: he is called the 'God of Glory' (Acts 7:2)... [2] The glory which is ascribed to God, or which his creatures labour to bring to him. 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name' (1 Chron. 16:29)  
**What is it to glorify God?** Glorifying God consists in four things: 1. Appreciation, 2. Adoration, 3. Affection, 4. Subjection. This is the yearly rent we pay to the crown of heaven.
- *Calvin's Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 7, Section 1:*  
 "The great point, then, is, that we are consecrated and dedicated to God, and, therefore, should not henceforth think, speak, design, or act, without a view to his glory."
- *R. C. Sproul:*  
 "We do not segment our lives, giving some time to God, some to our business or schooling, while keeping parts to ourselves. **The idea is to live all of our lives in the presence of God, under the authority of God, and for the honour and glory of God.** That is what the Christian life is all about."