

Introduction to topic

Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola gratia, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria

- The 5 solas of the reformation convey the central tenets of Protestantism championed in the 16th century reformation.
- As we approach Reformation day, my goal is to revisit these tenets, and introduce you to the people who championed them.
- There are many points where we could begin this journey
- We will begin our journey my meeting a man from a modest background, who gained entry into the University, achieved advanced degrees
- He was a man of the people, who preached the gospel, who came to acknowledge Jesus as the sole head of the church, who rejected papal authority and indulgences and was excommunicated for his beliefs.
- That man was Jan Huss (John Huss)
- These events took place in the University town of Prague

Background

- Huss lived from 1369 to 1415
- His father died when he was very young. His mother sought the best opportunity for his education, and managed to get him into the University of Prague
- The University was struggling against German influence
- Many of the Czechs were enthusiastic about the reformist ideas of Wycliff in England, the Germans largely opposed church reform
- The Czech people were ruled by King Wencelas, half brother to Sigismund, who deposed him.
- Culturally, the Czechs were dominated by the influence of the Germans, who made up the majority of the faculty at the University of Prague.
 - o This was a time of strong Czech Nationalism, which played a role in the coming controversy
- At this time, there were three Popes, which resulted in infighting within the church, which spilled over to the state rulers.
- Huss achieved his BA and MA at the University of Prague, he took up teaching at the University and became a preacher at the “Bethlehem Chapel”

Huss' protests

- He had no intention of leaving the church or really altering its beliefs, but rather restoring it to its ideals.
- Like Luther, when he regarded the church, he saw corruption:
 - o Corruption of the clergy including fornication, and self-enrichment at the expense of the people, referred to the clergy as the “Lord’s fat ones”
 - The church owned about half of the land in Bohemia, and taxed the peasants heavily
 - o Simony – Archbishop Zbynek purchased his post at age 25

- Abuse of indulgences – used to finance wars instigated to satisfy the ambitions of the church leadership.
- Infighting among 3 rival popes, who used indulgences to raise funds to wage war against their rivals
- People like Zbynek were not pleased with Huss, and sought assistance from the Pope to silence him – which was achieved through a large bribe
- Pope Alexander ordered an investigation into the spread of Wycliffe's doctrines, and ordered that preaching should take place only in cathedrals, parish churches and monasteries, Silencing Huss

Additional offences

- Preached in Czech language rather than Latin
- Refused to wear clerical garb that he believed contributed to an illegitimate distinction between clergy and laity
- Favored congregational singing
- Desired the reformation of the church

Huss' response, and other events

Huss determined that he could and should not stop preaching

- Zbynek responded by burning Wycliffe's books – the public was outraged and he was forced to flee for his life.
- In 1411, Huss was excommunicated for his disobedience by Archbishop Zbynek
- Result – Huss kept preaching, and came to hold the view that an unworthy pope is not to be obeyed, and the Jesus Christ, not the pope was the head of the church (Solus Christus).
- As the debacle involving the 3 Popes continued, he also came to believe that the Bible is the final authority by which the pope, as well as any Christian is to be judged (Sola Scriptura)
- His observations of the abuse of indulgences led him to the conclusion that these were wrong, and that only God could grant forgiveness. Selling what God gives freely is usurping God's power
- "Bad King" Wenceslas, who had been cashing in on the proceeds of the indulgences along with his friends in the church withdrew support for Huss
- Result – John XXIII excommunicated Huss again, this time as a heretic.
- An interdict was placed over Prague – majority of sacraments were withheld
- Huss left Prague, and preached throughout the countryside

Huss' trial and the aftermath

- A great council was called in Constance, Sigismund invited him to defend himself before the assembly, and granted him safe-conduct
- When he arrived, he was taken aside to a papal consistory and told to recant his heresy
- He told them he would if they could show him his heresy
- He was placed in a secure cell, and brought before the leaders in chains

- He insisted that he did not hold heretical views, and declared “I appeal to Jesus Christ, the only judge who is almighty and completely just. In his hands I place my cause, sine he will judge each, not on the basis of false witnesses and erring councils, but on truth and justice.
- On July 6, he was taken to the cathedral, dressed in his priestly garments, which were then torn from him. They shaved his head to erase his tonsure, and placed on him a paper crown decorated with demons.
- His last words, he prayed “Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies”.
- As he died, he was heard reciting the psalms
- The ashes were then taken and thrown in the lake

The aftermath

- Soon thereafter, 452 noblemen gathered in an assembly and announced their agreement with Huss, and opposing the church
- Members of all classes came together to support the movement, which developed “Four articles” as the basis for their resistance:
 - o The word of God was to be preached freely throughout the kingdom
 - o Communion – both bread and wine would be given (wine had been withheld from the laity)
 - o Clergy should be deprived of its wealth and live in “Apostolic poverty”
 - o Gross and public sin, especially simony would be properly punished
 - o The King refused this and instead sought to eradicate the Hussites by armed force in 1420
 - The King (Sigismund) was utterly defeated by Hussites, who took peasants carts, armed them with blades and used them to great effect against the forces of the King
 - These carts were the medieval equivalent to tanks – they were heavy wagons with firing slits from which a cannon could be employed, or archers and crossbowmen could fire arrows
 - These were deployed to great effect for centuries until updated firearms made them obsolete
 - o In 1421, the Hussites defeated an army of 100,000
 - o Multiple crusades were called against the Hussites in 1422, 1427 and 1431. In each instance, the Hussites defeated their enemies.
 - o After all these defeats, the Catholics were finally drawn to the negotiation table
 - o Consequently, the Bohemians rejoined the church, but held onto to principles articulated in the four articles
 - o Some Hussites did not accept the agreement, and went on to form the “Unitas Fratrum”, or “Unio of Brethren”
 - o One part of this movement went on to eventually become known as “Moravians”, another remnant joined in with the Calvinist movement during the Protestant reformation

Huss as Forerunner of the Reformation

- “You can burn this goose, but in a hundred years, a swan will come whom you will be incapable of killing”
- Johannes Zacharias (Huss’ fiercest opponent) was buried under the slab in the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt.
- A century later, a young German priest knelt down to be ordained in that very monastery. His name was Martin Luther.

Systematic

- Historically, the task of systematic theology has been to listen to the details of the Bible and discern how all of its truths fit together.
- The primary assumption of systematic theology is that the Bible is coherent.
- Every doctrine of Christianity touches every other doctrine in some way.
- The whole of Christian faith is intimately and intricately related.

Reformed Theology is Catholic

- The Reformation of the sixteenth century was an attempt to recover the apostolic faith.
- Reformed theology continues to embrace the catholic truths that all Christians affirm.
- In this sense, Reformed theology may be said to be “catholic,” which means universal.

The follow excerpt is from “The Story of Christianity Volume One” by Justo L. Gonzalez

“The word catholic means universal, but it also means “according to the whole”. To separate itself from the various heretical groups and sects, the ancient church began calling itself “Catholic”. This title underscored both its universality and the inclusiveness of the witness on which it stood. It was the church according to the whole, that is, according to the total witness of all the apostles and all the evangelists. The various Gnostic groups were not “Catholic” because they could not claim this broad foundation. Indeed, those among them who claimed apostolic origins did so on the basis of a hypothetical secret tradition handed down through a single apostle. Only the church Catholic, the church according to the whole, could lay claim to the entire apostolic witness. This was the warranty of the church’s orthodox, and this was the reason why “Catholic” eventually became a synonym for orthodox, or correct teaching. Ironically, through an evolution that took centuries, debates regarding the true meaning of catholic came to be centered on the person and authority of a single Apostle – Peter.

- These common, core doctrines are the foundation upon which the others rest.
- There is a tendency to think of Reformed theology only in terms of its distinctives, but the distinctives rest upon a common foundation shared with a host of other Christian bodies.

Reformed Theology is Evangelical

- All who are evangelical are catholic, but not all who are catholic are evangelical.
- Similarly, all Reformed Christians are evangelical, but not all evangelicals are Reformed.

- Reformed theology shares a common evangelical heritage with its Protestant brothers.
- The Reformers believed that with the proclamation of justification by faith alone they were recovering the evangel.
- Protestants used the word evangelical to say that they embraced Martin

Luther's view of sola fide.

- Sola Scriptura Literally Means "By Scripture Alone"
- One question dealt with by the doctrine of sola Scriptura relates to the sources of divine revelation, of which there are at least two:
 - i. Nature: general revelation
 - ii. The Bible: special revelation
- The question is whether there is more than one source of special revelation.
- According to Protestants, there is only one source of special revelation - Scripture
- According to the Roman Catholic Church, there are two sources of special revelation—Scripture and tradition.
- At the Council of Trent, Rome declared that the truths of God are found in

Roman Catholic Catechism – The Relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture

81 "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."⁴² "and [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching."⁴³

82 As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."⁴⁴

83 The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit...Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and

times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.

Source: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_PL.HTM

Examples of that tradition

- According to Rome, sacred tradition give us the holy scriptures
 - The Apostles left Bishops to take over after them
 - Apostolic preaching is preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time
 - The tradition of the eucharist
 - Other traditions inherited by Christ and the apostles
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- Sola Scriptura does not claim there are no other authorities beyond scripture
 - Reformers did not jettison the teachings of their predecessors
 - Reformers saw great spiritual truths set forth in the teachings of the church fathers and later theologians, most notably those of Augustine.
 - They made use of early creeds, including the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed
 - All controversies over theological questions must be settled in the final analysis by Scripture.

Sola Scriptura Bears on Questions of Inerrancy

- Since Scripture is the Word of God, it is infallible and inerrant.
- Some scholars argue that the doctrine of inerrancy was not held by Reformers, but that it was invented by later Reformed "scholastics."
- Statements from the Reformers themselves indicate that they believed the Scriptures to be inerrant.

IV. Sola Scriptura Involves a Hermeneutical Principle

- The Reformers taught the concept of private interpretation—the view that every Christian has the right and responsibility to read and interpret the Bible for himself.
- This concept of private interpretation was based on the principle of the perspicuity of Scripture, which means that the basic message of Scripture is plain for any person to see it.