

Reformation 500: The Five Solas

© 2017 by Daniel H. Chew

Introduction

On Oct 31st 2017, we mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. On that day 500 years ago, the German monk Martin Luther penned and nailed his 95 Theses upon the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, protesting the sale of indulgences by the late medieval church. Originally penned as a challenge for an academic disputation, the recent invention of the printing press resulted in the widespread dissemination of the 95 Theses, creating a cascade of events beyond Luther's, or anyone's, control. Four years later at the Imperial Diet (pronounced "dee-AT") of Worms (Jan 28-May 26 1521), Luther was called to repent of his teachings, upon which he uttered his famous words, "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, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. God help me. Amen."

Luther's defiance of Rome came about due to his recovery of the biblical Gospel of justification by faith alone. Over and against Rome's insistence on the necessity of good works for gaining heaven, Luther and the Reformers that came after him saw that the Bible teaches that we are counted righteous not because we are inherently righteous, but because God saves us by grace alone through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9). God "justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5), not the godly. Under the medieval system, no one could be certain of their salvation or standing with God, whether they would or would not go to heaven or hell. Despite their baptisms, if they did not perform enough good works, they would suffer the fires of Purgatory. And woe to those who commit mortal sins and die without making amends before the church, for their lot is damnation in hell.¹ People live in constant fear that they would either commit an unpardonable sin, or not perform enough good works to make the grade for God to accept them, and thus they did not live in the freedom and joy of the salvation the Scriptures promise us (Gal. 5:1).

The primary opponent of the Reformers was the emerging Roman Catholic Church, especially the Tridentine Roman Catholic Church (after the Council of Trent). The main fault line was the topic of justification by faith alone, but the division soon spread to other loci of theology. What is known as the 5 Solas was formulated to encapsulate the fundamental differences the Reformers have with Rome. The Reformers held to *Sola Fide* (Faith alone), as opposed to justification by faith and works. They held to *Sola Gratia* (Grace alone), as opposed to God's grace co-operating with the will of man for salvation. They held to *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), as opposed to the merits and mediation of

¹ Mortal sins, as opposed to venial sins, in Roman Catholicism are grievous sins that would make the Catholic believer lose the grace of baptism and liable to hellfire, not merely purgatory.

Christ plus Mary and the Saints. They held to *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), as opposed to the authority of Scripture and Tradition. Lastly, they held to *Soli Deo Gloria* (For the glory of God alone), which is the goal of all the other Solas, to bring glory to God alone, not to God and the Church, or God and Mary and the Saints.

On this 500th anniversary, there are countless articles that commemorate the Reformation, in defending both its formal and material principle (*Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Fide* respectively), against the errors of Rome.² I would like to do my tribute piece for this 500th anniversary differently. As I look through the 5 Solas, I would like to look at it from a viewpoint of contrast especially with the radicals known as the Anabaptists. Many Evangelicals do not realize that the Reformation was not just against Rome, but rather against both the Roman church and the Anabaptists. Just because something is not Roman Catholic does not necessarily imply that it is in line with the truths recovered at the Reformation, a proposition which will be made plain subsequently.

Faith Alone (*Sola Fide*)

As the Reformation erupted onto the scene, the material principle of the Reformation and its rallying cry was that justification is by faith alone. The Christian life is not a life of constant anxiety over whether I am or am not saved because I do not know if I did enough good works, or finished my penances, or paid the right amount of indulgences to remove time off from Purgatory. Rather, I am saved because I am considered righteous before God, as if I have not even sinned. More than that, I am considered righteous as if I have lived a righteous life (the doctrine of Double Imputation c.f. 2 Cor. 5:21). This is all accomplished through God who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). Therefore, I can come to Jesus and to God "just as I am," not because God winked at my sins as if they do not matter, but because Christ died for me, and thus by faith in him I can approach the throne of God boldly.

This rediscovery of the principle of Faith Alone was not just contrary to the official Roman sacramental system, but also to the more "spiritual" side of Roman Catholic spirituality. In the high medieval period (~10th -12th century AD), various monastic orders were founded for the pursuit of spirituality and deeper devotion to God, chief among them the Franciscans and Dominicans. In the late medieval period (13th-15th century AD), an order for laymen was even founded in the 14th century AD called the Brethren of the Common Life. As opposed to the earlier orders that still focus on service through the church, this lay order focuses on the renovation of the interior life, with a comparative neglecting of the institutional element of religion. We primarily know of this order due to the work of perhaps its most famous representative: Thomas a Kempis. In this book *The Imitation of Christ*, a Kempis focus on the renovation and reformation of Christian conduct to emulate the example of Christ, unto greater godliness.

It was this strand of medieval piety that led directly to the Anabaptists. Many people might assume that the Anabaptists were part of the Reformation, just that they were so "radical"

² "Formal principle" refers to the "form" or document or words under dispute that resulted in the Reformation. "Material principle" refers to the "matter" or the actual flashpoint doctrine that caused the Reformation.

they rejected infant baptism and attacked the Constantinian alliance between church and state. But that is a myth. The Anabaptists did not believe in faith alone. Rather, the focus of the Anabaptists was all about moral reformation. How one is right before God was through an increase in internal devotion, along the manner of the late medieval *via moderna* or *devotio moderna*,³ as the example of Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier has shown.⁴ When the Anabaptists finally came together to write a confession, what they emphasize is practice, not faith, as we can see in the Schleithiem Confession, a fact even acknowledged by the sympathetic Baptist scholar William Estep.⁵ Anabaptist soteriology was essentially late medieval soteriology without the necessity of the institutional church and her sacraments. It was the logical conclusion from the teachings of people like the nominalist Gabriel Biel and a Kempis, thus the notion of justification by faith alone is not well regarded by the Anabaptists at all.

Instead of being justified by faith alone, the Anabaptists focused on devotion and piety, especially on the need for separation from the world. It should come as no surprise therefore that Anabaptists either go to the extreme of political revolution (e.g. Peasants' Revolt, Munster Uprising), or to the other extreme of withdrawal from the world (Hutterite communes, Amish and Mennonite communities), as these are the two paths to take in order to separate from the world. Anabaptism, whatever variety it comes in, solves the problem of assurance and anxiety by externalizing the act that is considered a good work. After all, if justification is by godliness, and one mark of godliness is a certain form of separation from the world (e.g. join a commune), then a person does not need to be anxious about his salvation as long as he engages in this highly visible form of external piety (e.g. join the commune). One does not need to trust Christ alone for salvation, but rather exercise faith in the highly visible act of a separation from the world, and continuing along that trajectory. That is also why transgressing the code of conduct in these communes are such serious sins, for they breach the command of holiness required for being right before God, thus the one who transgressed has to either repent or be "put under the ban," shunned and thrown out of the "holy" community if necessary.

For most of the world especially in non-Western countries, we do not see Anabaptist communities around. And even in Western nations, it is unlikely that one would interact with for example an Amish in anything beyond surface relationships. Yet this only serves to create a blind spot for the error of the Anabaptists. In the contemporary church, how many people have no qualms with reading and recommending a Kempis' book *The Imitation of Christ*? How many people think that the way to deal with sin and wickedness is to preach the Law and one's obligation to do good works, instead of preaching the Gospel and God's grace to save people from their sins? How many people think that separation from the world is a good way to express holiness of life, instead of embracing God's grace to transform life while living in the world? To all these attempts of moralism,

³ The *via moderna* (Latin "modern way") and *devotio moderna* ("modern devotion") are technical terms to refer to the manner of theologizing and the piety of the medieval Nominalists, respectively.

⁴ Matthew Eaton, "Toward an Anabaptist Covenantal Soteriology: A Dialogue with Balthasar Hubmaier and Contemporary Pauline Scholarship," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* **84** (2010): 67-93

⁵ William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975, 1996), 65

the Reformation message of *Sola Fide* shouts forth the only way one can be right before God. We are right before God through trusting in Christ alone, not by any type of work. Even "evangelical works" do not save a person, or make a person any more right before Almighty God. We are not justified even by our attempts of obedience to God, or by separation from the world, but purely and only by coming to God empty-handed, and believing in Him and His Gospel.

As we come to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, let us come repenting of our attempts to do good works to gain favor from God. But also, let us repent from thinking our godliness and obedience, our piety, will help us gain favor with God. No matter how ungodly you are, or how godly you are, you still remain on the same level before the Cross. We are beggars all, even to the end of our lives, and only by pleading the grace of God in Christ are we saved.

Grace Alone (*Sola Gratia*)

We are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone. The material principle of the Reformation (*Sola Fide*) centers on the very real problem of the assurance of one's salvation before God. Yet as the Reformers staked their lives and ministries upon the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone, it became abundantly clear that the issue of God's grace must be dealt with also. In the Medieval Catholic Church, God's grace is insufficient unto salvation as to matter and efficacy. It was insufficient in matter because God's grace alone could not save sinners, but rather that the merits of the saints (from the "treasury of merit") was necessary to save sinners.⁶ It was insufficient in efficacy because God's grace alone could not truly save sinners by itself, but the cooperation of the will of Man was necessary.

In dealing with the topic of grace alone, most people will deal with the Roman Catholic issue of merit (insufficiency as to matter). The whole idea that Man could merit anything from God is simply ludicrous. After all, doing what is good is merely doing what is required, and the creature has no right to anything from the Creator (Lk. 17:9-10). Under the sovereignty of God, Man cannot merit anything before God. Salvation therefore must come by God's grace alone, if salvation is to be achieved.

But a deeper controversy with regards to the grace of God concerns the efficacy of God's grace. When the renaissance scholar Desiderius Erasmus was asked to refute Luther's theology, he critiqued Luther in his book *The Freedom of the Will* concerning the freedom of Man's will, with the contention that the will is truly free. Luther in response wrote *The Bondage of the Will*, where Luther defended in no uncertain terms the spiritual deadness of the will of Fallen Man. Man therefore does not have "free will," but rather the will of man is bound by sin, unable not to sin.

⁶ The "treasury of merit" was this "treasury" that Rome claims she possesses. The "Saints" are considered to be exceptionally holy people who did so many good works such that they have a surplus of merit. This surplus of merit is deposited into the treasury (like a bank account) that Rome possesses, and she is able to dispense the extra merit as she sees fit.

Why we may ask did Erasmus focus on this one topic, and Luther defended the idea that the will of man is not free? The reason why this question is actually a very important one is due to its implications on the efficacy of grace. If Man's will is indeed free from the bondage to sin, then that will has contributed something for salvation in choosing to believe in Christ for salvation. Therefore, salvation is not by grace alone, but by grace and some small work, Man's free choice of Christ. Once such a crack into the Reformer's doctrine of salvation is admitted, then the entire medieval system of works-righteousness can be brought back in through the back door. If Man's free choice is necessary, perhaps then the idea of the necessity of works for salvation is helpful, since surely Man must exercise the work of free choice to not suddenly stop choosing Christ? If Man's free choice is necessary, then perhaps the Roman sacraments are necessary for salvation in the sense that they help the free will in its continual choice for God. That is why this seemingly esoteric topic took on such significance for both Erasmus and Luther.

In the subsequent history of the Church, we know that even within Protestantism, synergism gained the upper hand.⁷ The Arminian controversy of 1618-1619 is merely the most prominent example where the principle of Grace Alone has been compromised. In this 500th anniversary celebration of the Reformation therefore, let us return once again to the principle of Grace Alone, and return to the monergistic doctrine of the bondage of Man's will, and the grace of God that can only save.

Christ Alone (*Solus Christus*)

Who is the mediator of God's elect? According to 1 Timothy 2:5, there is only one mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus. Jesus stands in the middle, as the bridge between God and Man. God blesses us in Christ, and we pray to God in Christ's name. Through Christ, God communicates with us, and we with Him.

In ancient times, as in the time of the Ancient Near-East (ANE) and in fact ancient societies in general, mankind had the primeval understanding (the remnant of the revelation to Noah) that not any Tom, Dick or Harry could have access to God or the gods. That is the function of priests, who mediate between the people and the divine. It was because the common people could not have access to the gods that they came to embrace lesser deities as household gods. Still there was a general understanding that not anyone could come before the gods as and when they please. Sacrifices had to be made, rituals done, before the worshiper could come before the divine, through the mediation of the priests who did all these on his behalf.

In the first century AD, Christianity came onto the scene with its strict monotheism, proclaiming that the office of priests were obsolete (both Jewish and pagan) since Christ is the only mediator that anyone needs to approach God. Old habits die hard however. After Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, many who had undergone a surface conversion saw God as remote and perceived the emerging cult of saints to be a viable alternative as a way of mediation with Christ who is God. Fast forward

⁷ Synergism is the doctrine that God and Man both (Greek "syn-") contribute to the work ("ergon") of salvation. Monergism is the doctrine that God alone ("monos") contribute to the work of salvation.

to the 16th century AD, and we see Mary and the saints treated as lesser mediators, to mediate between the people and Christ, who in turn is supposed to mediate with God the Father for them. Mary, who is both feminine and the mother of Jesus Christ, was seen as the best mediator due to the association of compassion with femininity and her closeness to Jesus. Now, in the 16th century AD, Mary had not yet been declared to be born sinless (that came at Vatican I), yet her exalted place for devotion was already present.

In light of such a corruption of biblical mediation, the Reformation proclaimed that Christ alone is our mediator. Over and against Mary and the saints, the Reformers insisted with 1 Timothy 2:5 that there is only one mediator, who is Christ. Mary and the saints do not mediate anything for anyone, for they themselves are sinners saved by God's grace, and have no right or merit to usurp Christ's office as priest.

In response, a common argument from Roman Catholics is that Mary and the saints are just intercessors, and asking them to pray for us is no different from a person asking his friend to pray for him. But that is to misunderstand what is actually going on in devotion to Mary and the saints. When someone asks his friend to pray for him, he does not pray to the friend to pray for him! He does not give devotion to that friend either. Thus, the mere fact that devotion is given to Mary and the saints imply that such is no mere asking for prayer, but rather the devotee is treating them as lesser mediators, so that they can mediate between him and Jesus.

The Reformation call of Christ Alone has implications beyond Roman Catholicism. If Christ is the only mediator, then that implies that Christianity is the only way of salvation, through the atoning work of Christ. But there is another implication for us today, an implication which was seen against the Socinians, the radical rationalist wing of Anabaptism.

The Socinians were a group of Unitarians and Arians, who deny the Trinity and see only the Father as God. Jesus was just an exalted man in their system. But if an exalted man is the mediator, then that implies that mediation is not really necessary. In fact, their rationalism itself is a denial of mediation, in that Man does not need God to gain knowledge. Instead of having many mediators, and a hierarchy of mediation as in Roman Catholicism, Socinians reject mediation altogether. And if mediation is unnecessary, that means that God is not necessary for living life. God might be present, his law still is useful, but Man can through his own effort work on his own betterment, and attain the good life on his own.

It is here that we see another relevance of the principle of Christ Alone for us today. Today, it is not the Roman Catholic view of mediation that has won. Rather, it is the Socinian view of mediation that rules the world. Even in many Evangelical churches, worshipers think that God must accept them just as they are. There is no sense of a need for mediation, that they can come and worship God only because Jesus mediates between them and God. Especially in the Third Wave Charismatic circles, there is the strange idea that one can "encounter God" just because one is a Christian, presuming upon God's grace and Christ's mediation without the attitude of godly fear that one is coming before

a holy God, and that any meeting with God (if any) should not be taken for granted. God is God, not a genie in a bottle for our enjoyment, and it is very sad when professing believers treat God no different from how a genie is to be treated.

As we remember the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, let us hold firm to the principle of Christ Alone, not just for the exclusivity of Christ, but also in recognition that mediation remains necessary. The modern world has lost its concept of mediation and has rejected the notion of priests. Christians do not have human priests, but we do have one great high priest in our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us attend to the things of God reverently, and remember we are still creatures living dependently before Almighty God.

Scripture Alone (*Sola Scriptura*)

"Bibel, Bubel, Babel." Such was the theology of the German enthusiast and radical Thomas Müntzer, in mockery of Luther's (and by extension the Reformers') view of Scripture and Authority. Theirs was the spirit of the word, as opposed the "dead letter." And in such an early mockery of Luther, we see the difference between the Reformation view of Scripture and one Anabaptist view of Scripture.

As the Reformation burst onto the scene, the question being asked about Luther is, "Who does he think he is?" Centuries of slow corrosion had given rise to the illusion that the Medieval Catholic Church was the mere continuation of the early apostolic church, and that there was no essential differences between the two. What was present in the late medieval era was nothing more and nothing less than what Jesus and the Apostles had always taught, or so it was believed. Who was this small German monk from an obscure town to question the Church, to question Christ and the Apostles? How dared he questioned what was always believed (or so it was thought) to be true? Who is Luther compared to the many scholars of the Church who had themselves studied the Scriptures, giants such as Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard, or the theologians of the Sorbonne? How could Luther be so confident he is right and the scholars wrong?

Thus, the question of authority came up as Luther faced the late medieval church. That is why the formal principle of the Reformation is the principle of Scripture Alone or *Sola Scriptura*. The question has never been whether tradition, creeds or the writings of theologians could be appealed to, but rather what was the final authority on matters of faith. Was it Scripture, as the Reformers taught, or was it Scripture and Tradition in some manner (the relationship of the two changed between Trent and Vatican II)? It is after all a common misunderstanding that the Medieval Catholic Church did not read Scripture. The common people did not, but the learned theologians of the medieval church did read Scripture, and commented on it. Luther's opponents appealed to Scripture as well, but Scripture as understood by the church. For us today, we should not think it as a major improvement (since Vatican II) that the Roman Catholic Church promotes the reading of Scripture, since the issue was never the reading of Scripture per se, but rather how one is to read Scripture.

Against the late Medieval Catholic Church, Luther puts forward Scripture as the final authority on all matters of faith. Thus, at the Diet of Worms of 1521, when asked to recant before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Luther refused, uttering his famous words,

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.

For Luther and the Reformers, the formal principle of Scripture Alone implies that Scripture is the ultimate authority. Creeds, confessions and tradition are important but are not the ultimate authority. If they conflict with Scripture, they are to be discarded as false. Fanciful gymnastics of trying to square the circles of Scripture and Tradition are thus rejected as a matter of principle.

Over and against the Reformation principle of Scripture Alone arose three distinct principles derived from the Anabaptists, who rejected both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The three principles are: (1) *Solo Scriptura*, Scripture only, otherwise known as biblicism; (2) Spirit above Word, or enthusiasm; and (3) Reason above Scripture, or Rationalism. The first principle was held by many Anabaptists and is the default view of modern-day Evangelicalism. The second principle was held by the mystical Anabaptists like the Zwickau prophets (or whom Thomas Müntzer was one representative), and is held to today by Charismatics. The third principle was held by the rationalist wing of Anabaptism, or the Socinians, and is held by theological liberals today. All three principles are a distortion of *Sola Scriptura* and should be rejected by those of us who are the heirs of the Reformers.

The first Anabaptist principle of *Solo Scriptura* rejects the use of all forms of creeds and tradition. It describes the phenomenon of "me and my Bible in the woods," where the perspicuity of Scripture is misunderstood to mean that everyone's interpretation of Scripture is equally valid. It is not surprising therefore that many of the Anabaptists were those with a little knowledge of Scripture, having enough knowledge to be dangerous and not enough knowledge to know what they were talking about. They read Scripture, and, refusing the aid of others, thought that they alone were the first ones to truly understand Scripture. The Swiss Anabaptist brethren were kicked out by the city council of Zurich after losing a disputation with Ulrich Zwingli, yet they refused to acknowledge their errors but continued to perpetuate their ignorance wherever they went.

The Reformation principle of Scripture Alone rejects the distortion of *Solo Scriptura*, as it acknowledges the benefits of creeds, confessions and tradition to help one understand Scripture. These are not the ultimate authority but they are to be taken into account as one interprets Scripture. In our rejection of Rome's distortion of biblical truth, we should not swing to the opposite extreme of rejecting tradition altogether, for rejecting its ministerial (as opposed to magisterial) use is dangerous, not because Scripture is

insufficient, but because we humans are not infallible in our interpretations of Scripture. That is why the Reformers in their controversy with Rome did not just quote Scripture, but also cited the early church fathers against Rome, not to pit one "tradition" against another, but to express the ministerial use of tradition by the Reformers.

The third Anabaptist principle is the principle of the anti-Trinitarian rationalists known as the Socinians. Their elevation of reason above revelation implies that Scripture is dethroned into a subordinate authority, something which Rome does not even do (Rome has Scripture and Tradition as equal authority (Trent), or Scripture as authority and Tradition as authoritative interpreter (Vatican II)). According to the rationalists both past, present and future, and which is seen in theological liberalism today, reason is king over Scripture. Needless to say, this option is not even an option for anyone seeking to follow God and His Word.

The second Anabaptist principle, as alluded to at the beginning of this section, is the "mystical" method of the mystical Anabaptists. Against Luther's focus on the Word of God, the Zwickau Prophets focused on the supposed "spiritual" meaning behind Scripture, leading Luther to declare that he would not listen to them even if they had swallowed the Holy Spirit "feathers and all." We are not Gnostics, and we do not think ourselves more capable to discern God's truth than the God who inspired the words of Scripture to us.

The Reformation principle of Scripture Alone therefore rejects this mystical principle of interpretation as well, and thus we should reject the charismatic view of revelation. God has given us His Word, and we have no right to think there is something behind the words, which only the "spiritual" can decipher. No, Scripture alone is our authority, and we ought to reject the thinking that pits God's Word against God's Spirit, as if the Spirit who inspired the Word (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:21) will contradict what He Himself had inspired!

As we remember the Reformation on this 500th anniversary, let us remember what the Reformation has given us in grounding the authority of our faith in Scripture, and treasure the Word of God to us. Let us not veer into unbiblical paradigms of interpretation, and let us reject all three principles of Anabaptism, in addition to the principle held to by Rome herself.

For the glory of God alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*)

At the end of the day, who gets the glory for salvation? Who gets the glory for the work of God and the church in this world? The Reformers proclaimed that only God gets the glory, all of it. Since salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone, there is absolutely no boasting of human effort whatsoever, whereas the rejection of these principles in the late Medieval Catholic Church allowed for some measure of boasting of human effort in salvation, and thus the glory of God is compromised. The principle of *Soli Deo Gloria* after all is the conclusion after the other four Solas, and concludes the polemics of the Reformers against Rome

As the conclusion of the Reformers' polemics, it must be admitted that this by itself does not express a substantial difference between the Reformers and Rome. After all, the motto of the Jesuits, an order founded in the Counter-Reformation, is "*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*" or "For the greater glory of God." The late Medieval Catholic Church, and the Tridentine Roman Catholic Church that succeeded her, valued God's glory very highly. Even though from the Reformers' point of view, Roman Catholicism compromised the glory of God, from the Roman Catholic point of view, it was the other way around. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, was passionate about God, and his desire to overthrow the Reformation stemmed from his conviction that the Reformation was a sacrilege to God. His misguided zeal caused much trouble to the Reformation, but his motive was pure. Just like Saul of Tarsus before his conversion, Ignatius thought he was actually serving God in forming the Jesuit order.

What then should we learn from this Reformational principle, since passion for the glory of God is not unique to the Reformation? We ought to learn that God's glory is an objective reality independent of what we humans think, say or do. First of all, God's glory is the goal of everything, our entire existence and salvation, and we ought to live and order our lives to bring glory to God. Secondly, and most importantly, since God's glory is an objective reality, we ought to examine what we do to ensure it really is giving glory to God. Ignatius Loyola thought he was giving glory to God in his zeal on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, but he ended up glorifying a corrupt institution and bringing disgrace to the cause of Christ. Likewise, the Anabaptists thought they were glorifying God with their re-baptisms of adults, and in their sedition against secular authorities, but they were in fact bringing disrepute to the Reformation which they claimed to be a part of. It is not sufficient to desire to bring glory to God, but rather we ought to examine everything according to Scripture to discern if what we do does in fact line up with Scripture and is done according to faith in Christ.

For our modern times, this principle especially calls us to re-orientate our lives and our thoughts. Much of modern life is secular, which means as pertaining to this age. While we continue to function in this life, in study, work and society, our orientation in life should be one geared towards honoring and glorifying the God who made us and saved us from our sins. We live in this age, but we are citizens of another, the age to come. Therefore, even while it is normal to be concerned about the things of this world, we must remember that all of these, though important, is temporary. We are pilgrims in a foreign land, awaiting another.

What does this mean for believers practically? It means that believers ought to orientate their lives in the way God has commanded us. That implies paying heed to God's pattern of time in honoring the Sabbath for example, which is the fourth commandment. God has called believers to remember and honor the Sabbath, and one way of showing we actually desire to glorify God is to keep the Sabbath holy. We are to faithfully attend to what the Reformers call the means of grace: preaching, sacraments and prayer (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q88), for doing so shows our obedience to what God has commanded and provided for us. We are not to think ourselves more spiritual than God, like the

mystical Anabaptists, but rather obey God in the ordinary means of grace. How can we say we want to glorify God while disobeying His direct command to honor the Sabbath?

It is of course true that the means of grace are not only all God has commanded us to do. Thus, we should seek also to be godly and grow in obedience to God in all things, in order to glorify God. Yet, here I focus upon the means of grace only because this is the more pertinent topic for us today in a culture of Evangelicalism. It is surely illustrative that for many, desire for godliness is purely a matter of internal piety, while the highly visible and ecclesiastical practices of piety are ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. But if one truly desires to grow in godliness and holiness, the first step should be the external practices of piety. It might sound easy to do, and perhaps for some it truly is easy to do, but it may not be as easy for some as for others.

In conclusion, we ought to live our lives for the glory of God alone. All of the other Solas have that as its goal, for we believe what we believe and do what we do only because we are passionate for God and His glory. Let us therefore, in view of God's grace and mercy to us, live our lives in such a manner as to glorify Him, as we learn from and extol the biblical truths taught in the other 4 Solas of the Reformation. Amen.