



*selected readings*  
ON THE REFORMATION

## DISPUTATION AGAINST SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY (1517)

5. It is false to state that man's inclination is free to choose between either of two opposites. Indeed, the inclination is not free, but captive.
6. It is false to state that the will can by nature conform to correct precept.
7. As a matter of fact, without the grace of God the will produces an act that is perverse and evil.
17. Man is by nature unable to want God to be God. Indeed, he himself wants to be God, and does not want God to be God.
21. No act is done according to nature that is not an act of concupiscence against God.
25. Hope does not grow out of merits, but out of suffering which destroys merits.
29. The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole disposition toward grace is the eternal election and predestination of God.
40. We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds, but having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds.
45. To state that a theologian who is not a logician is a monstrous heretic – this is a monstrous and heretical statement.
55. The grace of God is never present in such a way that it is inactive, but it is a living, active, and operative spirit.
68. Therefore it is impossible to fulfill the law in any way without the grace of God.
76. Every deed of the law without the grace of God appears good outwardly, but inwardly it is sin.
84. The good law and that in which one lives is the love of God, spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
90. The grace of God is given for the purpose of directing the will, lest it err even in loving God.
91. It is not given so that good deeds might be induced more frequently and readily, but because without it no act of love is performed.

## DISPUTATION ON THE POWER AND EFFICACY OF INDULGENCES (1517) “THE NINETY-FIVE THESES”

(All 95 theses appear earlier in this book, beginning on page 20. Our discussion will focus on numbers 1-3, 5-6, 8, 20-21, 27, 32, 36-37, 42-43, 50, 62-66, 80, 94 and 95.)

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*For Christians, then, the gospel brought release from the authority of the law. But what did this release really mean? Was the law at an end only as a way of salvation, not as an expression of God's righteous will in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:4)? Was the gospel itself to be understood as the new law abrogating the torah, or does it have a very different function, and if so where does the righteous will of God find ongoing expression? These are questions that have still not been settled in the history of Christian theology.*

**WOLFHART PANNENBERG, Systematic Theology, vol. 3**

*Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our church.  
Our struggle today is for costly grace.*

*Cheap grace means grace as bargain-basement goods, cut-rate forgiveness, cut-rate comfort, cut-rate sacrament; grace as the church's inexhaustible pantry, from which it is doled out by careless hands without hesitation or limit. It is grace without a price, without costs ...*

*Cheap grace means grace as doctrine, as principle, as system. It means forgiveness of sins as a general truth; it means God's love as merely a Christian idea of God .... The church that teaches this doctrine of grace thereby confers such grace upon itself. The world finds this church a cheap cover-up for its sins, for which it shows no remorse and from which it has even less desire to be set free. Cheap grace is, thus, denial of God's living word, denial of the incarnation of the word of God.*

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer,**  
*Discipleship*

## HEIDELBERG DISPUTATION (1518)

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| 1. The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him.    | 21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.                              |
| 2. Much less can human works, which are done over and over again with the aid of natural precepts, so to speak, lead to that end. | 26. The law says, “do this,” and it is never done. Grace says, “believe in this,” and everything is already done.                                    |
| 16. The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.    | 28. The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it. |
| 18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.          |  |

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*An indigenous theology of the cross would call into being a community whose most conspicuous mark would be the frustration of its every attempt to have a theology of glory.*

*The church lives only as it is given over daily to participation in the death of the cross. Only as it is itself denied the glory that it craves can it become the friend of those who can no longer pretend to glory. Only as it is itself denied the expansiveness and power and authority it covets can it be equipped to accompany men and nations into the depths of humiliation. Only as it is brought again and again to the experience of its own limits will it be able to participate in the life of a whole age which has been brought face to face with the limits of human endeavor and the human species. Only as it looks for light in the darkness, hope in the midst of despair, possibilities at the edge of the Red Sea, a way beyond failure, will it be a fit counselor to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death ... A Christian community that has undergone the cross and the night has the right to announce the dawn. But that is neither a description of our society nor of the church in it.*

**DOUGLAS JOHN HALL, Lighten Our Darkness**

## MARTIN LUTHER: A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels (1520)

It is a common practice to number the gospels and to name them by books and say there are four gospels. From this practice stems the fact that no one knows what St. Paul and St. Peter are saying in their epistles, and their teaching is regarded as an addition to the teaching of the gospels. There is, besides, the still worse practice of regarding the gospels and epistles as law books in which is supposed to be taught what we are to do and in which the works of Christ are pictured to us as nothing but examples. Now where these two erroneous notions remain in the heart, there neither the gospels nor the epistles may be read in a profitable Christian manner, and people remain as pagan as ever.

One should thus realize that there is only one gospel, but that it is described by many apostles. Every single epistle of Paul and Peter, as well as the Acts of the Apostles by Luke, is a gospel, even though they do

not record all the words and works of Christ; nor is this necessary ... For at its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, that he has been established as Lord over all things.

There you have it. The gospel is a story about Christ, God's and David's Son, who died and was raised and is established as Lord. This is the gospel in a nutshell. Just as there is no more than one Christ, so there is and may be no more than one gospel. Since Paul and Peter too teach nothing but Christ, so their epistles can be nothing but gospel ... Yes even the teaching of the prophets, in those places where they speak of Christ, is nothing but the true, pure, and proper gospel.

So you see that the gospel is really not a book of laws and commandments which requires deeds of us, but a book of divine promises in which God promises, offers, and gives us all his possessions and benefits in Christ.

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*That-which-is-preached is not the content of passages of Scripture. It is the gospel, the event of Christ through which we are saved. To think that what is preached is the Bible and the content of its passages is a quite different way of thinking about preaching. How did the church get from preaching of the gospel to the preaching of passages of the Bible?*

*It is clear that to divide the Bible into necessarily true passages is only one way among many ways of thinking about the Bible, of being "biblical," of placing oneself under the power and influence of Scripture ... To see a letter of Paul, a gospel, a prophetic tract as an aggregate of discrete units is surely to miss the writing as an argument, a polemic, a set of imageries, a theological perspective, a narrative. The very thing that gives the writing its power is its unity, its total concrete vision, its total movement.*

**EDWARD FARLEY, "Preaching the Bible and Preaching the Gospel"**

## PHILIP MELANCHTHON: The Loci Communes (1521)

Of the whole Scripture there are two parts: The law and the gospel. The law indicates the sickness, the gospel the remedy. To use Paul's words, the law is a minister of death, while the gospel is a minister of life and peace. "The strength of sin is the law," I Cor. 25:56; the gospel is the power or strength of salvation to everyone that believes. Nor has the Scripture so narrated the law and gospel in such a manner that one would regard as gospel what Matthew, Mark, Luke and, John have written, and as law what Moses has recorded. But the plan of the gospel is scattered; there are promises in both the Old and New Testaments. And again, laws are scattered throughout all the books of the Old and the New Testaments. Nor are the periods of law and gospel to be discriminated

as is commonly thought, although sometimes law, sometimes one after the other has been revealed. Every period that occurs to my mind is a period of law and gospel just as men of every period are justified in the same way: sin being revealed by the law, and grace through a promise of the gospel ...

Therefore law and gospel ought to be declared at the same time and both sin and grace ought to be shown. Two cherubim have been placed in the Ark, law and gospel; wherefore it happens that you cannot rightly and successfully teach the gospel without the law or the law without the gospel. And as Christ has joined the law with the gospel, so also the prophets joined the gospel with the law.

## OF THE CLARITY AND CERTAINTY OR POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD (1522)

The doctrine of God can never be learned with greater certainty than when it is taught by God himself, and he alone is truthful, indeed, he is the truth itself. This is proved by the words of I John 2: "Ye need not that any man should teach you." You hear that? We do not need human interpreters, but his anointing, which is the Spirit, teaches us of all things – all things, notice – and therefore it is truth and no lie. But at this point they say: I have prayed to him and I am still of the same mind as before. You will not take it amiss if I say: You lie. I allow, of course, that you prayed, but not as you ought. How then should I approach him and pray to him? In this way: First, put away that view of your own which you want to read into Scripture, for it is quite valueless, as I will clearly show. I know that you will reply that you have walked through the Scriptures and discovered texts which support your position. Alas! Here we come upon the

canker at the heart of all human systems. And it is this: we want to find support in Scripture for our own view, and so we take that view to Scripture, and if we find a text which, however artificially, we can relate to it, we do so, and in that way we wrest Scripture in order to make it say what we want it to say.

The doctrine of God is never formed more clearly than when it is done by God himself and in the words of God.

Indeed, I make bold to say that those who make themselves, that is, men, the arbiters of Scripture, make a mockery of trust in the Spirit of God by their design and pretension, seeking to wrest and force the Scriptures according to their own folly ... When you say then that an arbiter is needed to decide the issue and to compel those who are defeated, I deny it: for even the most learned of men are fallible except in so far as they are led by God.

*Seeing the historical consequences of the commitment to sola scriptura does not depend on examining all the myriad, biblically based truth claims made by those Christian groups and individuals who rejected the authority of the Roman church between the early 1520s and the mid-seventeenth century. The important point is that every anti-Roman, Reformation-era Christian truth claim based on scripture fits into this pattern of fissiparous disagreement among those who agreed that Christian truth should be based solely on scripture.*

*This matters today because the most important, distant historical source of Western hyperpluralism pertaining to the Life Questions is the Reformation insistence on scripture as the sole source for Christian faith and life, combined with the vast range of countervailing ways in which the Bible was interpreted and applied.*

**BRAD GREGORY, *The Unintended Reformation***

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## AN EXPOSITION OF THE FAITH (1529)

A sacrament is the sign of a holy thing. When I say: The sacrament of the Lord's body I am simply referring to that bread which is the symbol of the body of Christ who was put to death for our sakes. The papists all know perfectly well that the word sacrament means a sign and nothing more ... Yet they still allowed the common people to be deceived into thinking that it is something strange and unusual, something they cannot understand and which for that reason they have come to equate with God himself ... Now first we must understand that throughout the Bible there are to be found figures of speech, called in the Greek tropos, that is, metaphorical, or to be understood

in another sense. For instance, in John 15 Christ says: "I am the vine." This means Christ is like a vine when considered in relation to us, who are sustained and grow in him in the same way as branches grow in the vine ....

Similarly, in John 1: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," the first part of the verse is a trope, for Christ is not literally a lamb ...

Therefore, whether we like it or not, we are forced to concede that the words: "This is my body," cannot be taken naturally or literally, but have to be construed symbolically, sacramentally, metaphorically, or as a metonymy.

## ON THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH (1523)

First and chiefly, it is beyond our human capacity to bring the hearts of men to faith in the one God even though we had an eloquence surpassing that of Pericles. For that is something which only our heavenly Father can do as he draws us unto himself. Yet it is still the case, in the words of St. Paul, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore it is necessary not merely to instill faith into the young by the pure words which proceed from the mouth of God, but to pray that he who alone can give faith will illuminate by his Spirit those whom we instruct in his Word ... We [teachers of the young] ought to follow after truth with such consistency and single-heartedness that we weigh not only our own

speech but that of others, lest it contain any deceit or falsehood. Christ himself is the truth. Therefore the Christian must cleave steadfastly to the truth ... The young ought to fix their whole attention upon the fullest possible absorbing of Christ himself. When that is done, they will be a rule to themselves. And acting rightly, they will never be lifted up or cast down. They will increase daily, but will see to it that they themselves decrease. They will progress, but will always reckon themselves the least of all. They will do good to others, but will never hold it against them, for that was the way of Christ. And to be perfect we must set ourselves to follow Christ alone.

***In the eucharist, our whole selves and Christ's whole self meet one another at a common table.***

*By the power of the Holy Spirit, those who come to the table with a taste of faith encounter and receive not just bread and wine, but the living Christ. Both Calvin and Nevin describe the eucharist in this way, emphasizing Christ's presence in sacrament as well as Word, in symbolic objects and actions as well as doctrines ... both theologians were concerned to counter the depiction of the eucharist as either a human rite attesting to our belief or an event in which God communicates only with human minds and memories rather than whole selves.*

**Martha Moore-Keish,**  
*Do This in Remembrance of Me*



*The Eucharist carries the presence of Christ in a unique way which cannot be compared with any other mode of the presence of God... The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a personal presence which enters into a personal relationship with those who receive and believe. The eucharistic presence is neither a thing nor an object, it is a relationship of person to person.*

*The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the presence of his body and blood ... The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice; it is the real and living presence of Christ who was crucified for us.*

**MAX THURIAN**, *The Mystery of the Eucharist*

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### **HEINRICH BULLINGER: Of the Holy Catholic Church (1551)**

Here, then, I see a suitable place to show by what means and to what extent I may reckon hypocrites to be of the congregation of the Church. First, we make a distinction or difference between hypocrites. For there are certain hypocrites who put their confidence in their human justice and equity, doing all their works openly that they may be seen of men, firmly trusting and stiffly standing to the traditions of men. To these it is a custom and property not only to fly from the Church which teaches the righteousness of Christ, but also to curse, detest, and persecute it with all cruelty. Such were the Jews and Jewish Pharisees with whom our Lord Jesus Christ had much contention, and with whom even today the Church contends and makes wars. These are the plain and visible members of the devil's church, and they are not to be reckoned with the outward Church, indeed they are not worthy to be named in the Church of God. Again there are those hypocrites who are dissemblers, not putting any confidence in their

own righteousness and justice, nor greatly regarding the traditions of men. Such people neither hate the Church, nor flit from it, nor persecute it; but outwardly they agree with it, professing the same faith, and participating in the very same sacraments; but inwardly and in mind they neither believe unfeignedly and sincerely nor do they live holily. Of these, some for a season will cleave to the fellowship and company of the Church; and then, when the pretext arises they will fall from it as heretics and schismatics do and those who instead of friends become enemies. There are others who never fall from the Church, but keep themselves in the fellowship of the Church all their lives, outwardly pretending and feigning religion, but inwardly giving themselves up to their own errors, faults and wickedness: to whom the outward behavior and fellowship is undoubtedly not of the slightest benefit ... Such hypocrites and dissemblers, hanging on to the ecclesiastical body, are called members of the body, and are said to be of the Church.

*Many American teenagers do share a tacit common creed, with or without substantial exposure to faith education, that spans all social classes, developmental stages, and religious traditions. It is particularly evident in mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and non-religious youth. Seldom discussed, it is commonly practiced; never acknowledged, it functions as a powerful moral compass in many adolescents' daily lives. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism has little to do with God or a sense of a divine mission in the world. It offers comfort, bolsters self-esteem, helps solve problems, and lubricates interpersonal relationships by encouraging people to do good, feel good, and keep God at arm's length. It is a self-emolliating spirituality; its thrust is personal happiness and helping people treat each other nicely.*

*Why do teenagers practice Moralistic Therapeutic Deism? Not because they have misunderstood what we have taught them in church. They practice it because this is what we have taught them in church.*

**KENDA CREASY DEAN, *Almost Christian***

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## MARTIN BUCER: Concerning the True Care of Souls (1538)

Since the pastoral office involves such a great and important work, and one which so long as we live here is unending, that of presenting the church of Christ in all its members without fault, without stain or wrinkle, this office requires many sorts of ministry and work. And since the Lord has also bestowed and distributed the gifts necessary for this office not to one or two, but in different ways to many, it was his will his churches, if they were able to have meetings and essential order, should have elders, whether few or many according to the requirements of each congregation. These elders are necessary for the work we have referred to, that of winning and building up all those who belong to such a congregation ...

From this it is evident that there are five main tasks required to the pastoral office and the true care of souls. First: to lead to Christ our Lord and into his

communion those who are still estranged from him, whether through carnal excess or false worship.

Secondly: to restore those who had once been brought to Christ and into his church but have been drawn away through the affairs of the flesh or false doctrine. Thirdly: to assist in the true reformation of those who while remaining in the church of Christ

have grievously fallen and sinned. Fourthly: to re-establish in true Christian strength and health those who, while persevering in the fellowship of Christ and not doing anything particularly or grossly wrong, have become somewhat feeble and sick in the Christian life. Fifthly: to protect from all offense and falling away and continually encourage in all good things those who stay with the flock and in Christ's sheep pen without grievously sinning or becoming weak and sick in their Christian walk.

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*We assume that the Christian community or Church is the people which as such is unitedly and therefore in all its members summoned to this service. Two common distinctions are herewith abolished. The first is the recognition, far too readily accepted as self-evident in many of the Reformed confessions, that the Christian community comprises many dead as well as living members, i.e., Christians only in appearance. The truth is that not merely some or many but all members of the Christian community stand under the sad possibility that they might not be real Christians ... It is quite impossible, and we have no authority from the New Testament, to admit into the concept of the Christian community a distinction between real and unreal, useful and useless members.*

**KARL BARTH, *Church Dogmatics*, III.4**

*Much of what follows will be distinguished from the dominant pastoral theology published during the last fifty or sixty years. The discipline has tended to organize around a psychological interpretation of human experience and to begin its so-called theological reflection from there ... There is no doubt that much has been learned from this shift, but it has also had two negative consequences. The first is the loss of Christology, soteriology, and the Christian doctrine of God in the pastoral theology and practice of the church. The second, and a consequence of the first, is the tendency for pastoral work, when it lacks adequate theological foundation, to be given over to control by secular goals and techniques of care. From this the question arises: What makes pastoral work Christian?*

**ANDREW PURVES, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology***

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### CHURCH OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT

Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists ... The pure ministry of the Word and pure mode of celebrating the sacraments are, as we say, sufficient pledge and guarantee that we may safely embrace as church any society in which both these marks exist. The principle extends to the

point that we must reject it so long as it retains them, even if it otherwise swarms with many faults. What is more, some fault may creep into the administration of either doctrine or sacraments, but this ought not to estrange us from communion with the church. For not all the articles of true doctrine are of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion. Such are: God is one; Christ is God and the Son of God; our salvation rests in God's mercy; and the like. ... First and foremost, we should agree on all points. But since all men are somewhat beclouded with ignorance, either we must leave no church remaining, or we must condone delusion in those matters which can go unknown without harm to the sum of religion and without loss of salvation ... For there have always been those who, imbued with a false conviction of their own perfect sanctity, as if they had already become a sort of airy spirits, spurned association with all men in whom they discern any remnant of human nature... Indeed, because they think no church exists where there are not perfect purity and integrity of life, they depart out of hatred of wickedness from the lawful church, while they fancy themselves turning aside from the faction of the wicked ... They are vainly seeking a church besmirched with no blemish.

– Institutes, 1559 Latin edition





*On Sunday morning as the bells start to ring, calling the community and the pastor to church, the moment heaves with anticipation of a great, meaningful, even decisive event. The anticipation has nothing to do with how strongly the people feel it, or indeed whether there are even people present at all who consciously foster this anticipation. The anticipation is real; it permeates the entire scene ...*

*But what is the meaning of this situation? To what kind of event does this anticipation point? What does “God is present!” mean here? ... No, we cannot suppress it any longer: The question burns, is it true? Is it true, the vision of unity for those who are scattered; the anticipation of a steadfast pole amid the flight of phenomena; a righteousness that*

*does not lie somewhere behind the stars but within the events that make up our present life? Is it true, the speaking of the love and goodness of God who is more than some friendly diety of transparent origin and short-lived dominion? Is it true? This is what people want to hear, to know, to understand. Therefore they grasp, not knowing what they do, at the unheard of possibility to pray, to open the Bible, to speak of God, to listen, and to sing. Therefore they come to us, placing themselves into the highly grotesque situation of Sunday morning, which is indeed only the expression raised up toward this possibility.*

*Indeed, they want to hear, know, understand. They do not want to simply receive mere assertions and advice, no matter how heartfelt and sincere they may be. In this hearing, knowing, and understanding, they want to know if it's true, and not something else that beats around the bush.*

**KARL BARTH, “The Need and Promise of Christian Proclamation”**

**CALVIN WAS EXCEPTIONALLY SKILLED** at taking traditional doctrines and rhetorically reworking them so that they became the occasion for setting forth “the principles of faith” but also, more importantly, for the shaping of Christian character. Calvin’s predilection for attending to the affective dimensions of doctrine is particularly clear in passages where he discusses theological topics for which he has no use apart from their character-forming potential for Christians.

## SOLUS CHRISTUS

The faithful heart does not make for itself just any old kind of God by chance, but it looks upon Him who is the one true God. It does not attribute to Him whatever it pleases but is satisfied to have Him as he reveals Himself, always being carefully on guard not to go beyond His will by presumptuous insolence .... For God is revealed to us by His works; when we feel their power in us and receive the benefit of it, we must be more touched to the quick by such a knowledge of God, than if we imagined God in the air without having had the feeling of that knowledge by experience.

– Institutes, 1541 French edition

No man hath ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath made him known. Most appropriately this is added to confirm the previous statement [grace and truth came through Jesus Christ]; for the knowledge of God is the door by which we enter into the enjoyment of all blessings; and it is by Christ alone that God makes himself known to us, hence too it follows that we ought to seek all things from Christ.

– Commentary on the Gospel according to John

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*Integration into the church’s fellowship by baptism is only a secondary consequence of the implanting of individuals into Jesus Christ. In similar fashion the fellowship of believers is linked to participation in the Lord’s Supper, which assures individuals of their fellowship with Jesus Christ. The Lord’s Supper depicts both the common fellowship of all communicants in the one Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the church on this basis. This feature of descriptive action characterizes the administration of the Supper at Christian worship, which as a whole we may call a provisional representation of the eschatological people of God in its offering of praise to God.*

*The issue in both baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but primarily in baptism, is the fellowship of individuals with Jesus Christ, the unique grounding of this fellowship in the case of baptism, the assuring and demonstrating of it in the case of participation in the Supper. Partaking of the Supper of Jesus thus forms part of the individual history of appropriation of the new existence of Christians that is constituted by baptism.*

**WOLFHART PANNENBERG**, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3

***Solus Christus is an excellent summary of theology's first principle, and first love.***

*The gospel is essentially the announcement – the setting forth in speech – of what is in Jesus Christ. In Christ there is not only perfect humanity (Heb. 4:15) but also “the whole fullness of deity” dwelling bodily (Col. 2:9). In Christ there are trinitarian relationships: the filial piety of the Son for the Father and the unbreakable love of the Father for the Son in the Spirit. In Christ there is “the last Adam” who recapitulates and puts right the botched history of the first. In Christ there is the obedient Son that Israel never managed to be. In Christ there is salvation and “every spiritual blessing” (Eph. 1:3).*

**Kevin Vanhoozer,**  
*Biblical Authority After Babel*

*In the history of the church, the doctrine of election points to the need for identity as human beings in the world. Those who are nobody affirm their own self-worth as children of God by claiming that God has chosen them and enabled them to live faithfully. In this sense, to be chosen of God is to be granted full human identity and worth as a gift of God's love. No wonder not only the tribes of Israel, and the nobodies of the early church, but also those in every culture who have been considered less than human, or outcasts, have found reassurance that God has chosen them as covenant partners. In this aspect the idea of election enables communities to resist racism and other forms of oppression.*

**LETTY RUSSELL, Church in the Round**

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#### SOLA GRATIA

*Being justified freely by his grace.* The meaning is that since there is nothing left for men in themselves but to perish, having been smitten by the just judgment of God, they are therefore freely justified by His mercy, for Christ comes to the aid of their wretchedness, and communicates himself to believers, so that they find in Him alone all those things of which they are in want.

– Commentary on Romans

So let us remember that in debating about righteousness we must always consider this goal: that the praise of righteousness remains solidly and wholly God's because to show His righteousness, the apostle says: "He has poured out His grace on us so that He may be righteous" (Rom, 3:24). That is why in another place he says again: "You are saved freely and by God's gift, not by your works, in order that no one may glory in himself." (Eph. 1:6) ... Now if we seek to know how the conscience can have rest and joy before God, we find no other means than that He confers righteousness on us of His free generosity.

– Institutes, 1541 French edition

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*The economy of redemption was so decisive in early Christian reflection that it radically altered the way God was to be thought of. God was no longer simply the Father, the Creator and Master of the universe (Pantokrator) ... At the heart of the Christian doctrine of God were two affirmations: God has given Godself to us in Jesus Christ and the Spirit, and this self-revelation or self-communication is nothing less than what God is as God.*

**CATHERINE LACUGNA, God for Us**

***The election of Israel is a matter  
of divine grace, divine initiative.***

*It is not dependent on any intrinsic characteristic of Israel. Israel  
exists only because of God's choice, and apart from God it has  
no existence at all. Israel has no profane history, only a sacred  
history, a history of redemption, of backsliding and return,  
punishment and restoration.*

**Willie James Jennings,**  
*The Christian Imagination*

***All the natural movements of the soul are  
controlled by laws analogous to those of physical  
gravity. Grace is the only exception.***

**Simone Weil,**  
*"Gravity "*



*Faith has a capacity to undergird hope and love and to provide both the content and the context in which they flourish most creatively. In such a situation, faith in its turn becomes a beneficiary, for fruits of hope and love can nourish and deepen the faith from which they spring.*

**ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN, *Is Faith Obsolete?***

*Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process rather than as a possession. It is on-again-off-again rather than once-and-for-all. Faith is not being sure where you're going but going anyway.*

**FREDERICK BUECHNER, *Wishful Thinkin***

*Faith is not a human accomplishment or work. Human trust, or faith, simply responds to the faithful work of the God who creates out of nothing, and gives life to the dead. Our confidence in God responds to this story of all stories, and so can stand the test, during trial, and during times of suffering when the end cannot yet be seen; yet that faith is not "blind" nor "mindless," but has a God-given grounding in history, in God's actions for Israel and the world, as well as in a Person, in the character of the creating and resurrecting Lord of all.*

**EDITH HUMPHREY, *Ecstasy and Intimacy***

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*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei [the Church reformed always to be reformed in accordance with the word of God] is used a great deal in North Atlantic Reformed circles these days, probably because of the crisis in which most of these churches find themselves. ... What I have tried to make clear is that the Church's crisis is one of fundamental vocation, of calling to God's mission, of being, doing, and saying witness in faithfulness to Jesus Christ, the Lord. Our missional challenge is a crisis of faith and spirit, and it will be met only through conversion, the continuing conversion of the Church.*

**DARRELL GUDER, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church***

*Are the churches of the Protestant Reformation drawing all the consequences of their conviction that they belong to the one Church of God instituted by Christ? The key terms – sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia – can open no door other than that of the sola ecclesia ... The Reformation churches cannot forget that the Church has to be constantly reformed. Thus they will honour the name by which they are known only if they seek still today to undergo a confessional conversion which snatches them out of the danger of folding themselves up in their own identity.*

**GROUPE DES DOMBES, *For the Conversion of the Churches***

*In the domain of Christ's rule and revelation, Holy Scripture is the embassy of the prophets and apostles. Through their service, and quickened to intelligent and obedient learning by the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints is instructed by the living Christ.*

**John Webster,**  
*The Domain of the Word*

*Of all our slogans, this is perhaps the most cited in Protestantism generally. It is also the most problematic of our collection; indeed, in my judgment it cannot be salvaged for any significant use. The possibility – and perhaps inevitability – of abuse is provided by the sola.*

**Robert Jenson,**  
*Lutheran Slogans*



### SOLA SCRIPTURA

Now, in order that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture. Hence, there also emerges the beginning of true understanding when we reverently embrace what it pleases God to witness of himself.

If we turn aside from the Word, though we may strive with strenuous haste, yet since we have got off the track, we shall never reach the goal. For we should reason that the splendor of the divine countenance, which even the apostle calls “unapproachable,” is for us like an inexplicable labyrinth unless we are

### SOLA FIDE

Moreover, because the knowledge of God’s goodness cannot have great importance unless faith makes us rest in this goodness, we must exclude all knowledge which is mixed with doubt, which is not firm but wavers as if arguing over the matter. Now the human understanding, blinded and darkened as it is, lacks a great deal of being able to penetrate and reach to the knowledge of God’s will, and the heart, which is accustomed to waver in doubt and uncertainty, lacks a great deal of being reassured to rest in this persuasion. That is the reason the human understanding must be illumined from outside, before God’s word may gain full faith in us.

Now we have a full definition of faith if we resolve that it is a firm and certain knowledge of God’s good will toward us, being founded on the promise freely given us in Jesus Christ, is revealed to our understanding and sealed in our heart by the Holy Spirit.

– *Institutes*, 1541 French edition

conducted into it by the thread of the Word; so that it is better to limp along this path than to dash off with all speed outside it.

Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.

– *Institutes*, 1559 Latin edition





## REFORMATIONS

We are accused of rash and impious innovation, for having ventured to propose any change at all in the former state of the Church. What? Even if it has been done with good cause and not imperfectly? I hear there are persons who, even in this case, do not hesitate to condemn us; they think us right indeed in desiring amendment, but not right in attempting it ...

We maintain to start with that, when God raised up Luther and others, who held forth a torch to light us into the way of salvation, and on whose ministry our churches are founded and built, those heads of doctrine in which the truth of our religion, those in which the pure and legitimate worship of God, and those in which the salvation of men are comprehended, were in a great measure obsolete

... the Reformers have done no small service to the Church in stirring up the world as from the deep darkness of ignorance to read the Scriptures, in laboring diligently to make them better understood, and in happily throwing light on certain points of doctrine of the highest practical importance ...

Therefore, let there be an examination of our whole doctrine, of our form of administering the sacraments, and our method of governing the Church; and in none of these three things will it be found that we have made any change in the old form, without attempting to restore it to the exact standard of the Word of God.

### – THE NECESSITY OF REFORMING THE CHURCH (1543)