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THE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION
SOLA DEO GLORIA
(to God alone be the glory)

This is the last of the Five Solas of the Reformation. Since this will be the last of the Solas, perhaps we should review what and why we have been studying “the Solas.”

When the early Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, to name a few, began to break from the Roman Catholic Church, they realized that Rome had mingled the work of man and the work of God and on many occasions man received the credit when in reality it should be God.

According to the book “*Here We Stand*,” edited by James Montgomery Boice, and printed by Baker Book House, the current pope signs his letters, “To the Greater Glory of God.” Yet as we have studied the theology of Rome we find it very man-centered. There was another famous theologian during the Reformation and he was Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus and Luther found themselves on the opposite sides of the theological debates of the Reformation. Erasmus saw, as many did, that Rome needed to be revived. He became involved with the morals, the church life and structural changes of Rome whereas Luther attacked the very theological basis of Rome.

To attack the methods and style of the church was merely dealing with the symptom of a “sick and decaying” church. Luther knew that he had to confront the very fabric of Rome if anything was going to be accomplished. Instead of listening to Luther and others who were crying out with the same message, Rome chose

to excommunicate Luther, thus removing one of the great theologians of his day from the church and squelch any others that might have ideas of reform.

When the excommunication of Luther took place, the gauntlet was thrown down and the hope of repairing the breach between Rome and Luther was irreparable. Now the two distinct belief systems were separated and the Reformers began their studies in earnest.

As a result, there were five Solas that arose from the Reformation. Sola Scriptura (*Scripture Alone*), was the teaching that Scripture alone is our final authority in faith and life. Rome taught then and still teaches today that church tradition is on the same par with Scripture. Rome does not view the Bible as their final authority. There are those who might question my authority in making this statement, so the following is a direct quote from the *Catechisms of the Catholic Church* which was directed to be written by the present pope.

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age.” As a result the church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about revealed

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truths from the holy Scriptures alone.”

Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence. (p. 31)

Sola Christus (*Christ Alone*), means, it is Christ alone that should receive our worship. This flies in the face of Rome. It did then, and still does. Rome continues to elevate Mary to a position far beyond anything that Scripture teaches. *Scripture alone*, also denies that Peter is the Vicar of Christ and that Rome has the authority to determine what is Scripture and what is not.

Sola Fide, (*Faith Alone*). It is through Faith Alone that man is saved, it is not by being baptized as an infant and thus receiving the ability to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in “working out your justification” as long as you live.

One of the great confessions of all time is the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Puritans in England wrote this confession over a period of six years (1643-1649). In discussing faith the confession makes the following statement, “Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification” (chapter XI, paragraph 2).

Sola Gratia (*Grace Alone*). The fact that we are saved, kept, loved, and protected, is based on the grace of God alone. Rom 9:15-16 says; For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it {does} not {depend} on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

When we lose Biblical authority, God does not get the glory. Other things do. In the case of Rome, Mary, the Church and the Pope receive undue adoration. Mary and the Pope, in many areas of the world, in practical outworkings, receive the same worship as Christ. Worship becomes entertainment, preaching becomes marketing, feeling good about ourselves becomes more important

than believing and faithfulness is equated with success. It is so very important that we focus on worshipping God more than self-satisfaction.

In all that we do, it should be God that gets the glory and not us. John Calvin was not against music in the church but he was against singing in parts. He said that you begin to listen to the beauty of the music then those that are singing get the glory and not God. We might disagree with his application, or we might not, but his idea was correct. In all that we do it is God and God alone that should receive all the glory.

He is our Lord and Savior, the King of Kings, the Alpha and Omega. The Fairest of ten thousand, the lily of the valley, the bright and morning star.

We are not.

As Christians, we hold to these dear truths and should refuse to let them fall under the feet of modern evangelicalism.

It has been my privilege to write regarding the five great truths of the Reformation. The next articles will revolve around different topics. If you are interested in visiting my web page, it is www.rdm.org. I also have an e-mail address. If you are interested in sending your responses to the articles send them by e-mail to louishill@rdm.org. I will attempt to respond to as many as possible.

Our Purpose...

**The Purpose of
Reformed Discipleship Ministries
is to bring the truth
of the Reformation
to a discipling ministry...**

ON A PERSONAL NOTE...

“To most people there was but one explanation for the calamity: the wrath of God. A scourge so sweeping had to be divine punishment for sin. One writer compared the plague to the Flood.” (See Historical Facts)

In the politically correct world in which we live, along with the view that God is “nothing but love” it is, in the view of many well meaning believers, that God had nothing to do with the plaque of the dark ages and certainly nothing to do with our national crisis in America today. Many do this in order to “get God off the hook.” They do not want God to be embarrassed and even more they do not want to have to explain how this loving God could condone such horrible events. To quote from “*Chosen by God*” by Dr. R.C. Sproul, “If one molecule is outside the control of God, He is not God.”

In the Bible studies which I teach I ask people to return to the basic attributes of God to try and discover whether our emotional views of God are in line with the objective data given us by the Scripture. There are many attributes of God that make Him God but at this time I will only mention four. God is Omnipotent (All Powerful) God is Omnipresent (All present in all places); God is Omniscient (All Knowing) and finally God is Immutable (He does not change). In most cases, Christians will declare they believe these truths about God which separate Him from His creatures but, then when the events of the day or historical events seem out of perspective with our personal view of God, many times we abandon the truths that we say we believe and declare that God did not know, (there goes omniscience) or He had nothing to do with these events, (there goes all knowing and all powerful). This is not to say that God reveals why He brings these things about but our task is to understand that He does.

Many will raise their protest, but we see in Genesis that He killed the entire world except for eight. Were they more wicked than we are now. I think not.

Amos 3:6 “If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?”

In the mid 30’s AD, Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem. Historians declare that as many as one million people died there. Luke 21:5-6 says; And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, “{As for} these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.”

I am not attempting to give the why or other aspects of the calamities of the past, present and those to come, I am only saying that evil does not win over God. He is still in control, just as much as when He destroyed the world, Jerusalem and the Twin Towers. To declare anything else is to lessen His power and make Him Semi-omnipotent. That word is hard to spell, hard to say and does not apply to God.

Keep praying for Reformed Discipleship Ministries. I am encouraged with what God is doing.

Talk to you in a few months.

Louis

TRUTH*matters*



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MINISTRY *update:*

Mary and I wanted to write you this letter to Thank You and your Ministry for the impact you have had in our lives. We consider ourselves fortunate to have a mentor couple to guide us in our Christian walk and in our husband and wife relationship. Thanks to you, we are better equipped to face some of life's ups and downs.

We are very grateful that we have been a part of your Sunday afternoon Bible study for the last three years. We find it rewarding and enjoy it as something that we can do together. The amount of information seems overwhelming at times, yet after every study we walk away spiritually enriched by the experience. The fellowship, friendship, leadership and mentorship provided to us is invaluable.

We both look forward to our weekly one on one meetings with you and Kay. You hold us accountable and allow us an avenue to talk. We thank God for your ministry, and we want you to know we plan to be in this for "the long haul." Thank you for investing in our lives.

Your Friends, Mary and Elcio Silva

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Historical Facts



When a Third of the World Died

During the Black Death, the greatest catastrophe in human history,
how did Christians respond?

In October 1347, when a Genoese trading ship fresh from the Crimea docked at a harbor in Sicily, dead and dying men lay at the oars. The sailors had black swellings the size of eggs in their armpits and groins, swellings that oozed blood and pus, and spreading boils and black blotches on the skin. The sick endured severe pain and died within five days of the first symptoms.

Other symptoms appeared in some of the next victims: continuous fever and spitting of blood. These victims coughed, sweated heavily, and died within three days or less—sometimes in 24 hours. No matter the symptoms, everything about the victims smelled foul, and depression and despair fell over them when they contracted the disease.

The disease, bubonic plague, was so lethal some went to bed well and died before morning; some doctors caught the illness at the patient's bedside and died before the patient.

Borne by ships traveling the coasts and rivers, by early 1348, the plague had penetrated Italy, North Africa, France, and crossed the English Channel. At the same time, it moved across the Alps into Switzerland and reached eastward to Hungary.

In a given area, the plague wreaked its havoc within four to six months and then faded, except in larger cities. There it slowed in winter only to reappear in spring in rage for another six months. In 1349, it hit Paris again and began spreading through England, Scotland, and Ireland as well as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, and Iceland, sometimes in chilling fashion. Off the coast of Norway, a ship drifted aimlessly offshore, finally grounding itself in Bergen. On boarding the ship, people discovered a load of wool and a dead crew.

By mid-1350, the plague had passed through most of Europe. The mortality rate ranged from 20 percent in some places to 90 percent in others. In many rural villages, the last survivors moved away, and the village sank back into the wilderness, leaving only grass-covered mounds. Overall the estimate of one medieval observer matches that of modern demographers: "A third of the world died." That would have meant about 20 million deaths.

In other words, from 1347 to about 1350, medieval Europe experienced perhaps the greatest calamity in human history. It shouldn't surprise us that this plague, or the Black Death as it is often called, left its mark on medieval Christianity. But in many cases, the mark it left looked as hideous as the symptoms of the Black Death itself.

Death in an afternoon.

In the plague's early stages in Paris, 800 people died a day, in Pisa and Vienna, 500 each. There was no time for last rites, let alone proper burials: "And no bells tolled," wrote one chronicler, "and nobody wept no matter what his loss because almost everyone expected death."

Appeasing God's Wrath

To most people there was but one explanation for the calamity: the wrath of God. A scourge so sweeping had to be divine punishment for sin. One writer compared the plague to the Flood.

Efforts to appease God's wrath took many forms, but the most common were processions authorized at first by the pope. Some lasted as long as three days, and some were attended by as many as 2,000 (which, of course, just help spread the plague). Penitents went barefoot and wore sackcloth; they sprinkled themselves with ashes, wept, prayed, tore their hair, carried candles and relics. They wound through city streets, begging for mercy from Jesus, Mary, and the saints.

When the plague refused to abate, the processions moved from ceremonies of remorse to self-flagellation. The flagellants believed they were society's redeemers; they re-enacted Christ's scourging on their own bodies to a

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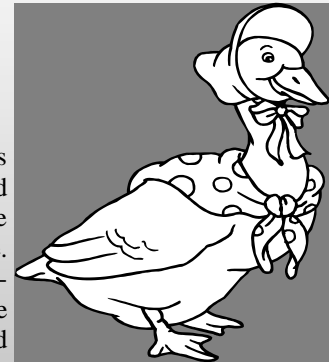


Ring Around the Rosies

Ring around the rosies, a pocket full of posies,
Ashes, Ashes, All fall down.

This came out of the Black Plague of Europe. A rosy rash is the first symptom of the plague. This rash begins to show up in the arm pits and in the groin areas. The posies are herbs and spices to sweeten the air. They were usually worn in the upper left shirt or coat pocket, as near to the nose as possible. The stench of death and the decaying of bodies that had hurriedly but inadequately buried filled the air of the cities and small towns. Ashes represent the bonfires that lit up the night as the dead were buried. As literally thousands died every day there was an attempt to burn the bodies because they could not be buried fast enough and on many occasions the bodies were dug up by dogs. All fall down is the final act of dying. People lived in terror and daily thousands were dying and nothing could be done to stop it.

MOTHER•GOOSE



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SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communication with God, are under His wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Q. 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.

Q. 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, forever.

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atone for human sin.

Stripped to the waists, beating themselves with leather whips tipped with iron spikes until the blood flowed, groups of 200 to 300 (and sometimes up to 1,000), marched from city to city. They begged Christ and Mary for pity, and townspeople sobbed and groaned in sympathy. They performed three times a day, twice publicly in the church square and once in private.

They were organized under a lay Master for usually 33 1/2 days—to represent Christ's years on earth. They pledged self-support and obedience to the Master. They were not allowed to bathe, shave, change clothes, sleep in beds, or talk without the Master's permission.

The movement quickly spread from Germany through the Low Countries to France. Hundreds of bands roamed the land, exciting already overwrought emotions in city after city. Inhabitants greeted them with the ringing of church bells and offered them hospitality. Children were brought to them to be healed. People dipped cloths in the flagellants' blood and pressed the cloths to their eyes and preserved them as relics.

The flagellants quickly grew arrogant and began overtly attacking the church. Masters began hearing confessions, granting absolutions, and imposing penance. Priests who tried to stop them were stoned; opponents were denounced as Antichrists. The flagellants took over churches, disrupted services, ridiculed the Eucharist, looted altars, and claimed the power to cast out demons and raise the dead.

Any time, any place. Especially after the Black Death, medieval society was keenly aware of the suddenness with which death could strike.

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